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THE CONTRIBUTION OF KARL
MARX TO MASS SOCIETY THEORY

by

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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read,
and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Contribution
of Karl Marx to Mass Society Theory" submitted by
Michael H. Luther in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Abstract

This work consists of an analysis of the contribution of Karl Marx to the development of the critique of mass society.

Mass society theory and class theory are two theoretical perspectives which emerged together during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Within contemporary theory two divergent views of society can be distinguished, represented in the work of Dahrendorf (class theory) and Kornhauser, Shils and Bell (mass society theory).

Marx's contribution to class theory is well documented, but his contribution to mass society theory has received scant attention. It will be argued that at least two aspects of Marx's work are highly relevant to mass society theory.

Mass society theory during the past century has attempted to distinguish between traditional and modern societies, this distinction becoming an integral theoretical perspective of sociology. It will be shown that Marx preceded Tönnies in analyzing the atomized and depersonalized nature of social organization resulting from modernization; a central theme in the development of mass society theory.

Further analysis in mass society theory has

focussed upon the phenomenon of bureaucratic centralization. A contextual analysis of Marx's work shows his extreme concern with this problem. In his writings of the 1850's Marx recognized that a distinctive type of political system, absolutistic and bureaucratic in nature, tends to arise in arid or semi-arid regions which make the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture. Marx's later work discloses considerable concern for the problem of power in post-capitalist societies, revealing a powerful anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic bias, both in relation to the distant communist society and to the period of transition to precede it.

In the conclusion, the main arguments are reviewed, and Marx's contribution to mass society theory is placed in the context of the wider tradition of the critique of mass society.

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INTRODUCTION

I. Statement of the problem

The purpose of this paper is to assess the contribution of Karl Marx to the development of the critique of mass society. It will be argued that at least two aspects of Marx's work are relevant in this regard. One kind of analysis which has contributed significantly to the development of mass society theory during the past century is the effort to distinguish between traditional and modern societies, a line of analysis that has become a central theoretical perspective of sociology. An early formulation of this perspective was Maine's¹ distinction between societies dominated by status relations of kinship and those dominated by contract relations of individuals. Tönnies² in his analysis of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, elaborated Maine's thesis. Further evolution of this line of analysis is to be found in Durkheim's theory of social solidarity and anomie³, and in Max Weber's treatment of traditional and bureaucratic authority.⁴

What made this kind of sociological theory relevant to the idea of mass society was its analysis of the atomization and depersonalization of social

organization resulting from modernization.

A second kind of analysis which has contributed to the development of the idea of mass society is that which has focussed upon the analysis of the phenomenon of bureaucratic centralization. The theorists who have contributed to this tradition, such as George Simmel, Max Weber and Kannheim have been concerned with the threat to human freedom, both in the philosophical and political senses, posed by bureaucracy. It will be shown that Marx has contributed to both of these kinds of analysis. Not only did he precede Tönnies in the use of the terms Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, but further the problem of the bureaucracy was one which concerned him throughout his life.

2. Justification of the study.

This study performs several useful functions.

Firstly from the point of view of the history of ideas, it places Marx more precisely in the context of nineteenth-century political and social thought.

Mass society theory and class theory are two theoretical perspectives which emerged out of the controversies of nineteenth and twentieth century political and social thought. These two different views of society reflect a more fundamental division in the history of social thought, a division which relates to the question: how is it that human

societies cohere? This division represents the reappearance in sociology of conflicting philosophical positions in the history of Western political thought. Generally speaking, mass-society theorists tend to view society in terms of stability and equilibrium; class theorists, in terms of instability and change. Class theorists tend to see society as composed of two organized groups (in relations of subordination and superordination) competing for positions of domination, and the heuristic purpose of class theory is the analysis of structurally produced change. Mass-society theorists, on the other hand, tend to see society as composed of a large unorganized mass, who merely provide a basis of legitimacy and "support" of competing elites within the dominant group. Furthermore, mass-society theorists, given this perspective, are concerned less with the explanation of change than with that of stability or equilibrium.

Karl Marx's contribution to class theory is well documented, but his contribution to the history of the critique of the mass society has received scant attention. It will be the purpose of this paper to examine his contribution to mass society theory and thereby understand more fully his relation to wider sociological theory.

Secondly, a more detailed knowledge of Marx's

work on the state and the bureaucracy may enable us to better understand events in Russia since 1917 and in China since 1949. Why is it that the U.S.S.R. has become a centralized, bureaucratically-run state?

Thirdly, it reveals quite clearly that Marx was aware of the problems which would certainly arise in post-capitalist society and which were beginning to arise in capitalist society; problems that are usually referred to as those of Big Government, Big Capital and so forth.

3. Plan

- (1) Introduction: This concluding section of the Introduction will present a brief outline of the major themes which are developed in this thesis. There are three chapters and a conclusion -- an outline of each follows.
- (2) Chapter I: Chapter I will provide an outline of the theoretical background to this problem. It will be shown that mass society theory and class theory are two theoretical perspectives which emerged together during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and that within contemporary theory two divergent views of society can be distinguished, represented in the work of Dahrendorf (class theory) and Kornhauser, Shils and Bell (mass society theory). Marx's contribution

to class theory is well documented but his contribution to mass society theory has received very little attention.

- (3) Chapter II: Chapter II will be concerned with Marx's discussion of traditional and modern societies and his description of the trends toward social atomization. It will be shown that the social framework of modern industrialized nations described by Marx is in many ways the archetype of Tönnies Gesellschaft. Chapter II will also discuss Marx's analysis of the structural forces which shape the existence of contemporary man, namely:

- (a) the division of labour,
- (b) commodity exchange, and
- (c) state power.

The significant fact about this aspect of Marx's analysis is his insistence (an insistence which will become even clearer in Chapter III, which analyzes his work on bureaucratic centralization) that these forces of alienation would not necessarily cease to operate in post-capitalist society.

- (4) Chapter III: Chapter III will be concerned with Marx's account of bureaucratic centralization, and the analysis will take place within a wider

discussion of Marx's views on the state. It will be divided into three parts:

- (a) Marx's Classical theory of the state;
- (b) Marx's secondary view of the state; and
- (c) Marx's discussion of power in post-capitalist society.

- (a) Classical theory of the state: First of all Marx's Classical theory of the state will be outlined, the state as an instrument of class rule, and stress will be placed on Marx's increasing departure from the Hegelian system.
- (b) Secondary view of the state: It will then be shown that Marx had a secondary view of the state: the state as independent from and superior to all classes; as being the dominant force in society rather than the instrument of a dominant class. The beginnings of this theory are contained in Marx's discussion of Bonapartism, but for Marx, the Bonapartist state however free it may have been politically from any given class, remains and cannot in a class society but remain, the protector of an economically and socially dominant class.

The clearest statement of this secondary view is contained in Marx's writings on societies based on the "Asiatic mode of

production", whose place in Marx's thought has recently attracted much attention. Reduced to its essentials, Marx's argument is that political power (i.e. of the political bureaucracy) arises from the exercise of a necessary social function: namely, the provision of large scale public works.

This aspect of the analysis is extremely detailed, largely because Marx's theory of Oriental society was never formulated in a systematic fashion, but has to be pieced together from a large number of scattered sources.

Marx's theory is both

(i) historical, and

(ii) sociological.

(i) Sociological: In his writings of the 1850's, in which he discussed the Oriental state, Marx stressed both

(a) its centralized character, and

Aside: He argued that

(i) there is no Oriental feudalism;

(ii) its absence is synonymous with the non-existence of private landed property, which in turn is due to climatic and soil conditions.

(iii) the centralized Oriental despotism has arisen from the need to provide artificial irrigation.

(b) its independence from the vast mass of scattered village communes.

Oriental society, in other words, is clearly something more complex than a system of canals. It has to do

- (a) on the one hand, with centralized, i.e. despotic regulation of the basic economic functions, and
- (b) on the other hand, with the prevalence of the self-sufficient village economy.

But the key has to be sought in the "absence of private property in land".

(ii) Historical: In the posthumously published draft for Das Kapital, the so-called Grundrisse (1857-8)⁵, the roots of despotism are traced back to the tribal organization, with its tendency to realize its internal unity in a personal ruler.

A difficulty with the argument lies in the fact that the more strictly historical part of Marx's theory is to be found in the

1857-8 draft.

Elements of theory of Oriental society: In his Theories of Surplus Value (1861-63)⁶, Marx quotes Richard Jones to the effect that "the surplus revenue from the soil, the only revenues except those of the peasants of any considerable amount, were (in Asia, and more especially in India) distributed by the state and its officers".

It will be shown that together with
(a) his own previous observations on the importance of centrally controlled irrigation in Asia, and

(b) with Engel's subsequent remarks (mainly in the Anti-Duhring) about the emergence of a ruling class from within primitive society, the elements of a complete theory of Oriental despotism appear to be present.

(c) Power in post-capitalist societies: Finally it will be shown, through an analysis of Marx's work of the 1860's and early 1870's, that he was very much concerned with the problem of power in post-capitalist societies.

This aspect of Marx's work in particular reveals a powerful anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic bias, in relation to both the distant communist society and also to the period of transition which is to precede it.

- (5) Conclusion: In the concluding chapter, the different themes will be brought together and an attempt will be made to show how these themes relate to the wider mass society tradition.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry Maine, Ancient Law (London, 1861). This reference is to the 1906 edition (New York: Henry Holt).

²Ferdinand Tönnies, Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, translated and edited by Charles P. Loomis (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957).

³Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960) and Suicide: a Study in Sociology (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1951).

⁴Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

⁵Karl Marx, Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf) (Berlin, 1953); originally published in 2 volumes (Moscow, 1939-41); part of this draft was revised and published by Marx in 1859 under the title Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie; the bulk was reworked from 1863 onwards into what is now called Das Kapital.

⁶Karl Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, translated by G. A. Bonner and Emile Burns (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1951).

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Introduction.

"Class society" and "mass society" are best understood in terms denoting models of certain kinds of relationships that may come to dominate a society or part of a society. Societies or institutions organized in these ways are said to have a "class character" or "mass character", and the life of individuals in such societies is said to be governed primarily by "class relations" or "mass relations".

2. Mass society and class theory.

Mass society theory and class theory are two theoretical perspectives which emerged out of the controversies of nineteenth and twentieth century political and social thought. These two different views of society reflect quite accurately a more fundamental division in the history of social thought, a division which relates to the question: how is it that human societies cohere?

Generally speaking two (meta-) theories can and must be distinguished in sociology. One of these, the integration theory of society, conceives social structure in terms of a functionally integrated system held in equilibrium by certain patterned and recurrent

processes. The other one, the coercion theory of society, views social structure as a form of organization held together by force and constraint and reaching continually beyond itself in the sense of producing within itself the forces that maintain it in an unending process of change.

The integration theory of society is founded on a number of assumptions of the following type.¹

- (i) Stability: Every society is a relatively persistent, stable structure of elements.
- (ii) Integration: Every society is a well-integrated structure of elements.
- (iii) Functional coordination: Every element in a society has a function, i.e. renders a contribution to its maintenance as a system.
- (iv) Value consensus: Every functioning social structure is based on a consensus of values among its members.

The coercion theory of society can also be reduced to a small number of basic tenets:

- (i) Instability: Every society is at every point subject to processes of change; social change is ubiquitous.
- (ii) Non-integration: Every society displays at every point dissensus and conflict; social conflict is ubiquitous.

(iii) Non-functional coordination: Every element in a society renders a contribution to its disintegration and change.

(iv) Coercion: Every society is based on the coercion of some of its members by others.

This division represents the reappearance in sociology of conflicting philosophical positions in the history of Western political thought. Generally speaking, mass-society theorists tend to view society in terms of stability and equilibrium; class theorists, in terms of instability and change. Class theorists tend to see society as composed of two organized groups (in relations of subordination and superordination) competing for positions of domination, and the heuristic purpose of class theory is the analysis of structurally produced change. Mass-society theorists, on the other hand, tend to see society as composed of a large unorganized mass, who merely provide a basis of legitimacy and "support" of competing elites within the dominant group. Furthermore, mass-society theorists, given this perspective, are concerned less with the explanation of change than with that of stability or equilibrium.

It needs to be stressed at the outset, that, whilst this division exists, in the case of individual theorists, the distinction is not always clear cut.

Pareto², for example, moves in the course of his work from a class model to a mass model. Pareto shares with Dahrendorf³ the emphasis on authority structures; in fact his work is clearly the proximate origin of Dahrendorf's theory of conflict. Since he argues in terms of authority, Pareto also operates with a two-class model. He concentrates, however, on the group possessing authority, and this has important implications for the analysis of the subject groups and of conflict theory in general. By concentrating primarily on the elite or dominant group, Pareto tends to reduce all changes to changes in the composition of the ruling group, i.e. to one type of social mobility.

Aside: Quite consistently, then, revolutions are for Pareto abnormal events which betray the weakness of an elite, namely its inability to rejuvenate by absorbing new members.

Pareto's "circulation of elites" aims at the regeneration of a leading stratum which is assumed to be widely recruited by individual mobility.

By virtue of this emphasis Pareto's theory takes a strange turn, of which he is probably not aware.

Although he originally refers to two classes, his approach gradually and barely noticeably reduces itself to a "one class model", in which only the ruling group functions as a class proper. He refers to the

subject group as a "mass" and "the rest of the population". This notion of a residual category defined by privation and not considered as an independent operative force robs any theory of conflict of its substance.

Similarly Marx refers to the French peasants of the 18th Brumaire as a mass who provided merely a basis of legitimacy and "support" of competing groups within the political class.

3. Contemporary class and mass society theory.

Introduction: The work of Dahrendorf represents the most theoretically advanced statement of class theory, and in the following summary of the position of contemporary class theory, Dahrendorf's work is the single source drawn upon. Mass society theory has much less of a systematic character than class theory. There exists no statement of mass-society theory which displays a degree of formalization and rigidity that Dahrendorf's statement of class theory possesses. In the absence of such a statement it is necessary to draw on the work of several theorists, notably that of Daniel Bell, William Kornhauser and Edward Shils.

Contemporary class theory (i.e. Dahrendorf)⁴:

- (a) Summary of theory: Dahrendorf suggests a number of premises, concepts, models, and empirical generalizations which appear to have a bearing on problems

of social conflict and social change; these suggestions do not display a degree of formalization and rigidity that would warrant calling them a theory.

This shortcoming is partly deliberate and partly unavoidable. It is deliberate in that Dahrendorf views attempts at formalization in sociology as, at the present time, more pretentious than useful, and he wishes to avoid seeing his approach exposed to the same criticism. At the same time, he admits that formalization in sociology is useful. From this point of view he regrets not having been able to give a more rigid formulation to his approach. If in my summary of Dahrendorf's abstract analysis I try to summarize the main points of his approach to group conflict, the seemingly systematic character of this summary should not be mistaken for a statement that complies with the methodological standards of scientific theories.

- (i) Premises: Dahrendorf's approach has to be understood in terms of two premises - one formal and one substantive - which, although they are of a meta-theoretical or methodological nature, provide the necessary frame of reference of its elements.

- (a) Formal_premise: The heuristic purpose of the approach proposed in the present study is the explanation of structure change in terms of group conflict.

The purpose is therefore neither purely descriptive, nor related to the problems of integration and coherence.

- (b) Substantive_premise: In order to do justice to this heuristic purpose, it is necessary to visualize society in terms of the coercion theory of social structure, i.e. change and conflict have to be assumed as ubiquitous or chronically potential or endemic; all elements of social structure have to be related to instability and change, and unity and coherence have to be understood as resulting from coercion and constraint.

- (ii) Concepts: Within this frame of reference, according to Dahrendorf, the theory of social classes and class conflict involves a number of concepts to be defined.

- (a) Authority: "Authority is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons."⁵

- (b) Domination: Domination refers to the possession of authority, i.e. the right to issue authoritative commands.
- (c) Subjection: Subjection refers to the exclusion from authority, or the duty to obey authoritative commands.
- (d) Imperatively coordinated association: "An association is an imperatively coordinated association in so far as its members are, by virtue of a prevailing order, subject to authority relations."⁶
- (e) Latent interests: Orientations of behaviour which are inherent in social positions without necessarily being conscious to their incumbents, and which oppose two aggregates of positions in any imperatively coordinated association, are latent interests.
- (f) Quasi-group: Quasi-group means any collectivity of individuals sharing positions which have identical latent interests without having organized themselves as such.
- (g) Manifest interests: Manifest interests mean orientations of behaviour which are articulate and conscious to individuals,

and which oppose collectivities of individuals in any imperatively coordinated association.

- (h) Interest_group: Interest groups mean any organized collectivity sharing manifest interests.
- (i) Social_class: Social class means such organized or unorganized collectivities of individuals as share manifest or latent interests arising from and related to the authority structure of imperatively coordinated associations. It follows from the definitions of latent and manifest interests that social classes are always conflict groups.
- (j) Group_conflict: Group conflict refers to any antagonistic relationship between organized collectivities of individuals that can be explained in terms of patterns of social structure (and is not, therefore, sociologically random).
- (k) Class_conflict: Class conflict means any group conflict that arises from and is related to the authority structure of an imperatively coordinated association.

(1) Structure change: Any deviation of the
 (a) values (normative structure) or
 (b) institutions (factual structure)
 of a unit of social analysis at a given
 point of time ($T + dt$) from those at a
 preceding point of time (T) is a structure
change, in so far as it involves the in-
 cumbents of positions of domination.

Radicalness of structure change: Radical-
 ness of structure change refers to the
 significance of consequences and ramifica-
 tions of structure change.

Suddenness of structure change: Suddenness
 refers to the extent to which incumbents
 of positions of domination are removed.

(iii) Theory of formation of classes⁷: The formation of
 conflict groups of the class type follows a
 pattern that Dahrendorf describes in terms of
 a model involving the following partly analyti-
 cal, partly hypothetical steps:

(a) Model:

1. In any imperatively coordinated
 association, two, and only two aggregates
 of positions may be distinguished, i.e.
 positions of domination and positions
 of subjection.

2. Each of these aggregates is characterized by common latent interests; the collectivities of individuals corresponding to them constitute quasi-groups.
3. Latent interests are articulated into manifest interests; and the quasi-groups become the recruiting fields of organized groups of the class type.

(b) Empirical generalizations: Articulation of manifest interests and organization of interest groups can be prevented by the intervention of empirically variable conditions of organization.

1. Structural conditions: Among the conditions of organization

- (i) technical conditions (personnel, leadership, charter-values),
- (ii) political conditions (freedom of coalition), and
- (iii) social conditions (communication, patterned recruitment),

can be distinguished.

2. Nonstructural conditions: To these, certain nonstructural psychological conditions (internalization of role interests) may be added.

(iv) Theory of class action or class behaviour:

According to Dahrendorf⁸ the course of group conflict of the class type also follows a pattern that can be described in terms of a model involving both analytical and hypothetical elements.

(a) Class conflict: Once the formation of conflict groups of the class type is complete, they stand, within given associations, in a relation of group conflict (class conflict).

1. Intensity of class conflict: The intensity of class conflict varies on a scale (from 0 to 1) according to the operation of certain factors.

a. Intensity and organization: The intensity of class conflict decreases to the extent that the conditions of class organization are present.

b. Intensity and associational dissociation: The intensity of class conflict decreases to the extent that class conflicts in different associations are dissociated (and not superimposed).

e.g. Industrial, political and church conflict.

c. Intensity and group conflict

dissociation: The intensity of class conflict decreases to the extent that different group conflicts in society are dissociated (and not superimposed).

e.g. Race, class and religious conflict

d. Intensity and class and status

superimposition: The intensity of class conflict decreases to the extent that the distribution of authority and the distribution of rewards and facilities in an association are dissociated (and not superimposed).

e. Intensity and mobility: The intensity of class conflict decreases to the extent that classes are open (and not closed).

2. Violence of class conflict: The violence of class conflict varies on a scale (from 0 to 1) according to the operation of certain factors.

a. Violence and organization: The violence of class conflict decreases to the extent that the conditions

of class organization are present.

b. Violence_and_deprivation: The violence of class conflict decreases if absolute deprivation of rewards and facilities on the part of a subjected class gives way to relative deprivation.

c. Violence_and_regulation: The violence of class conflict decreases to the extent that class conflict is effectively regulated.

(b) Structure_change: Group conflict of the class type affects structure changes in the association in which it occurs.

1. Radicalness_and_intensity: The radicalness of structure change co-varies with the intensity of class conflict.

2. Suddenness_and_violence: The suddenness of structure change co-varies with the violence of class conflict.

Contemporary mass society theory.

(a) Mass_society_as_a_model_of_a_certain_kind_of_relationship: A "mass society" is one in which many or most of the major institutions are organized to deal with people in the aggregate and in which similarities between the attitudes and behaviour of individuals tend to be viewed as more important than

differences.

(b) Structure of mass society: The distinctiveness of "mass society" can be understood in a number of ways. I choose to define it (not exhaustively) within the following dimensions:

1. Large population:⁹ The most obvious fact about contemporary society is its size and number.

Large populations do not by themselves produce mass relations, however, although mass relations are less likely among small populations.

In the past, large societies were divided into many segments with relatively clear boundaries separating each segment from the other. Even though a society contained thousands of villages, all of them much alike, it was not a mass society because human relations centred on the village - and supported the integrity of the village as a social unit.

Unlike the village-based society, the mass society does not help to sustain spontaneously evolving durable social units. "Mass" in its simplest sense means an aggregate of people without distinction of groups or individuals.

2. Large scale activities:¹⁰ It is not so much the large size of the population as it is the large

scale of activities that favours mass relations.

Where the scale of activity is very great, it is more likely that the social relations which individuals bring with them or develop will be easily ignored or transformed by the dictates of technical efficiency or effective control.

Thus, mass relations are likely to emerge where large-scale activities predominate, as in nationwide organizations, markets, audiences and electorates.

3. The decline of community:¹¹ Large-scale activities favour the emergence of the mass because they tend to develop at the expense of communal relations.

- (a) Local communities: The local community comes to provide for fewer of its members' needs and therefore cannot maintain their allegiance.

The rural community no longer is isolated and self-sufficient. As it becomes dependent on the city, and particularly on national markets and organizations, the rural community loses its significance and cohesion. The city does not develop the communal life that was formerly provided by the rural community.

The individual who migrates to the city does not enter the community as a whole, nor is he likely to enter a sub-community of the city. The urban sub-community loses its coherence as a result of the increasing scale and specialization of common activities. Instead of affiliation with a community, the urban resident frequently experiences considerable social isolation and personal anonymity.

- (b) Ethnic and religious communities: Ethnic and religious groups also tend to lose their coherence as their members are drawn into large-scale organizations and arenas.

Individuals derive less of their social identity, style of life and social values from their ethnic and religious background.

As ethnic cultures come into contact with mass culture, they cease to preserve their unique qualities.

Religious groups tend to de-emphasize their theological and liturgical differences. The particular religious affiliation loses its significance for both religious and secular beliefs and conduct.

Even if people continue to associate

primarily with coreligionists, this has little influence on the quality of their lives or on the manner of their participation in the larger community.

- (c) Class communities: Like local, ethnic and religious communities, class-based communities tend to lose their importance and coherence where the whole population is incorporated into large-scale activities.

i.e. Social classes weaken as sources of distinctive values, styles of life, and social identity; and they increasingly resemble one another in the beliefs, values, and interests of their members.

Class distinctions are levelled, and class boundaries are blurred.

Class consciousness and class solidarity dissolve into mass consciousness and mass solidarity.

The lower classes are increasingly brought into arenas of communication, politics and consumption previously limited to the higher classes.

Class differences in opportunities and modes of participation that remain are no longer believed to be desirable or permanent.

Common symbols of the good life and of rights and obligations replace class-differentiated concepts.

Classes remain as categories of people who differentially share in common ways of life rather than as self-conscious groups with distinctive ways of life.

Status strivings and anxieties abound, but this testifies to the ambiguity of status where fixed social hierarchies no longer exist.

(d) Pseudo-community: During the 1920's and 1930's a number of sociologists reported on various aspects of modern life and generally stressed

(i) the anonymity and

(ii) atomization

of persons in contemporary society.

Following World War II, this portrait of modern life was subject to considerable criticism on the grounds that primary relations are much in evidence in the factory, the army, and other allegedly impersonal organizations. Kinship networks, neighbourhood bonds, and local activity were observed in a number of urban and suburban settings, and primary group mediation of mass communications was

shown to prevail over completely atomized audiences. Such observations suggest that the decline of community is at most relative to the conditions of pre-modern society.¹³

(e) Re-appraisal: There is much more to the problem of community than the question of the mere presence or absence of personal attachments and communal bonds. Students of mass society assert that:

(i) The functions of primary groups are weakened under conditions of modern society, not that primary groups are absent.

The decreasing role of primary relations in the social organization of mass society and their increasing isolation from the larger society weaken them as sources of meaning and support for the individual in the larger society.

(ii) Moreover, they are more easily broken because they receive less support from the institutional framework of society.

Both weaknesses stem from the attenuation of the links between primary relations and the major functional areas of society.

(f) Effects: search for new forms of community:

The isolation of primary relations creates the need for more inclusive bonds of solidarity and gives rise to a search for new forms of community. The barriers to community thrown up by the mass character of society heighten receptivity to the appeals for new forms of community.

These ideologies (i.e. appeals for community) simulate but do not create community, and consequently they make people more available for manipulation and mobilization. They exploit a general dilemma facing the individual in mass society:

- (i) either he demands highly personalized meaning from the mass enterprise and suffers frustration, or
- (ii) he withholds commitment to it and suffers loss of identity.

This hypothesis has been applied to otherwise widely diverse social contexts:

e.g. Totalitarian mass movements: The German middle-class youth movement at the beginning of the century made the "return to Gemeinschaft" its cardinal article of faith. The Nazi movement subsequently inscribed the "folk community" on its

ideological banner and won many adherents on the strength of this appeal.

e.g. Human relations movement: Much more mundane cases have been examined in the context of American industry. Programmes of "human relations" in industry exploit unfulfilled needs for social bonds and participation, in the interest of greater worker efficiency.¹⁴

- (g) Conclusions: "Social alienation", "false personalization", "enforced privation", and similar notions found in the writings on mass society point, however unsteadily, to the pathology of community in modern society.¹⁵ This concern with the quality of social relations - the fabrication of symbols, the exploitation of unfulfilled needs for personal response, and related matters - marks the perspective of mass analysis. As a perspective it invites attention to
- (i) the various distorted forms and expressions of the search for community;
 - (ii) the social conditions that promote them; and
 - (iii) the consequences for individuals and institutions that flow from them.

4. The decline of authority:

- (a) Rationalization of authority: The decline of authority accompanies the decline of community. For the loosening of the various cohesive groupings that make up a society is at the same time the dissolution of the authority of these groups over the individual.

Traditional standards and customary authorities anchored in

- (i) kinship,
- (ii) church, and
- (iii) community

are replaced by bureaucratic systems of legal and political control. The rationalization of authority, liberates the individual from the often harsh and always close constraints of the cohesive group; however, it also removes the direction and support supplied by such a group but not by the large and impersonal bureaucracy.

- (b) Effect of: The decline of authoritative standards and leadership creates anxiety and insecurity; feelings of aimlessness and lack of social direction become widespread.

Such a state of anomie generates the quest for new authority and heightens recep-

tivity to pseudo-authority.

As in the case of the search for community, mass analysts try to identify the symptoms and consequences of inappropriate and inauthentic responses to genuine needs for authoritative standards and direction.

e.g. Charismatic leader: The rise of charismatic leadership to this need.

But of greater significance is the quality of this leadership - whether it is the carrier of new values or merely the popularity of a demagogue or celebrity. Where mass media of communication and the techniques of manipulation and mobilization are highly developed, it hardly suffices to say that popular enthusiasm is sufficient to demonstrate a charismatic relationship. The conditions of mass society facilitate the fabrication of charisma in the absence of value commitments on the part of either leaders or masses.

(c) Pseudo-authority: More generally, whenever the claim to authority is based substantially on the manipulation of symbols rather than on the invoking of standards, one may speak of pseudo-authority. What concerns mass analysts are situations in which there is a marked

discrepancy between the symbols and the substance of authority.

e.g. The claim that public opinion is authoritative under conditions of mass democracy is a case in point. Where public opinion becomes a slogan for whatever is believed to be popular, rather than a process and product of public deliberation and discussion, it is a form of pseudo-authority.

This is a powerful tendency in mass society because of the difficulties of making and eliciting personal responses in mass arenas and bureaucratic institutions. The ease of mass manipulation and the difficulty of public deliberation favour the symbols of democracy without the substance, especially where the symbols are widely stereotyped in terms that do not invite close scrutiny or comparison with actual experience.¹⁶

- (d) Totalitarian systems: The most extreme manifestation of manipulated and mobilized opinion is found in totalitarian systems. The unanimous elections, the staged demonstrations, and the mass indoctrination programmes reveal the possibilities of pseudo-democracy.

Totalitarianism itself is greatly facilitated by the existence or creation of masses of people who are not attached to independent social groups. Indeed, the study of totalitarianism is instructive because it shows how the effort to mobilize a whole population actually requires the destruction of bonds of

(i) authority, and

(ii) community,

and their replacement by ideological organizations. However, the ultimate reliance of totalitarian regimes on the use of force testifies to the limits of this strategy of mobilization. Moreover, mass conditions do not by themselves produce totalitarianism. The existence of modern technology plus the availability of large numbers of socially unintegrated people make totalitarianism possible, but a number of other conditions must be present to prepare the way for totalitarianism.

5. Mass Organizations:¹⁷ Mass organizations replace communal groups as the characteristic units of society. Mass organizations are large and formal, but some large and formal organizations exhibit

more of a mass character than do others.

The additional features that constitute a mass character include

- (a) membership that is structured primarily by administrative devices rather than through social relations, and
- (b) correlatively, activity that is mobilized from the centre rather than generated through various groups within the organization.¹⁸

Mass organizations do not build on the primary relations of members, nor do they support and facilitate primary relations among members. The result is a relatively unmediated, and depersonalized relationship between the membership and the organization.

Where the organization seeks a highly active membership, as in certain kinds of mass parties, intense identification with the organization may be created.

Most mass organizations do not seek a mobilized membership, however, and do not possess the symbols or other sources for mobilization. Instead, they are content with passive support from their members, who in turn acquire little social identity from the organization. Solidarity

tends to be weak under these conditions and symbolic or personal gratifications correspondingly slight. Unlike membership in communities, membership in mass organizations tends to be a fragile bond because relations are impersonal and levelled. This weakness is indicated by high rates of mobility of members, as they respond to opportunities for greater benefits and to new interests elsewhere.

6. Mass arenas: As mass organizations replace communities, so do "mass arenas" displace local arenas. Mass arenas, including
- (a) national markets, and
 - (b) national electorates,
- are spheres of activity common to all sections of the population.

Like mass organizations, mass arenas are managed from the centre rather than structured through social relations. They are managed primarily through the mass media of communication, since only in this way can an entire population be presented simultaneously with the same objects of attention.

People participate in mass arenas by selecting from among the alternatives presented through the mass media. Since the alternatives are stan-

dardized in order to reach the entire population simultaneously, and since they are directed to individuals as undifferentiated members of the society, participation transcends the individual's social relations.¹⁹

(c) Mass equalitarianism:

(a) Normative orientation: Pervading all kinds of mass relations is a common normative orientation of equalitarianism. All members of mass society are equally valued as

- (i) voters,
- (ii) buyers, and
- (iii) spectators.

Numerical superiority, therefore, tends to be the decisive criterion of success. In the political realm this means the number of voters; in the economic realm it is the number of sales; and in the cultural realm it is the size of the audience.

Mass equalitarianism is strengthened by the attenuation of the social bases of inequality, notably membership in

- (i) ethnic,
- (ii) religious, and
- (iii) social class groups.

In contrast to the equalitarianism of small numbers, as in friendships, mass equalitarianism emphasizes the similarities of individuals rather than the uniqueness of persons.

- (b) Equalitarianism and bureaucratization of organization: Mass equalitarianism is linked to the bureaucratization of the organization. Mass organization simultaneously encourages
- (i) the bureaucratic centralization of governing powers and
 - (ii) the levelling of social differences among the governed.

The incorporation of all sections of the population into large scale activities summons centralized organization for coordination and control. Mass bureaucracies favour the levelling of differences in the interests of efficiency. By treating everyone alike, according to functionally rational rules and procedures, mass bureaucracies foster equalitarianism.

- (c) New hierarchies: However, bureaucratic recruitment on the basis of professional competence raises new hierarchies. To be sure, careers open to talent are in greater harmony with equalitarian beliefs than is selection according to family and property. But professional elites

are nevertheless elites and thereby introduce new social distinctions.

This is a source of strain in modern society; in the political realm, for example, there is a tension between planning by experts and participation by mass electorates.

(d) Politics of mass society:

- (a) Legitimacy of political regime: Mass egalitarianism is expressed in the populist character of mass society. Whatever is believed to express the popular will, or to meet the most widely shared expectations is considered legitimate.²⁰

Political regimes strive to be popular regimes, whether they are dictatorial or constitutional.

Aside: While this popular legitimation of authority centres in the polity, it pervades all kinds of social institutions. Populism places a premium on the capacity of leaders to create and placate popular opinion. Those who are effective in mobilizing large numbers of people have greater power, and this generally means the leaders of mass parties. The mass leader seeks to embody and reflect popular desires; masses, not elites are the ultimate sources of legitimation in mass

society.

This leads elites to make themselves readily accessible to popular pressures: that is, they are forced to be responsive not only to periodic expressions of public opinion through regular channels such as elections, but also to momentary and ad hoc representations of whatever is claimed to be popular.

- (b) Controlling mass opinion: Leaders, of course, do not seek merely to respond to mass opinion. They also try to control it.

Since they lack firm bases of independent authority, their control tends to take the form of manipulation and mobilization rather than command.

The very presence of large numbers of only

(i) loosely organized and

(ii) loosely committed

people summons efforts of leaders to manipulate and mobilize them. For if elites are highly accessible to mass pressures, so are masses readily available for mobilization by elites.

People are receptive to direct appeals from remote elites, because they are

(i) poorly attached to proximate symbols and

relationships, and

(ii) increasingly caught up in distant events and activities.²²

(c) Structural features of polity in mass society:

The outstanding structural feature of the polity in mass society is the direct elite-mass relationship, or more precisely the absence of intermediary voluntary groups.²³

(e) Mass movements:²⁴

As mass society develops there is a growing cleavage between those who continue to be integrated in local groups and those who have already been incorporated into mass relations.

(i) Old classes vs. new classes: In part this is a difference between the old classes and the new classes -

(a) craftsmen versus industrial workers,

(b) independent entrepreneurs versus industrial managers,

(c) free professionals versus members of professional staffs -

and so forth. Increasingly isolated from the larger society, members of the declining classes readily come to believe that they are the victims of it.

More generally, the locally attached, in their resentment of the ascendancy of big

cities, big government, big business and big labour, become receptive to the appeals of mass movements directed against the forces of mass society.

- (ii) Transition from communal relations to mass relations: Then there is the growing number of people who have been detached from communal relations but who are not, or not yet, incorporated into mass relations.

It is likely to include, among others,

- (a) new migrants to the cities,
- (b) new workers in the factories, and generally,
- (c) the younger and newly mobile members of the society.

In the absence of strong group ties, they are less constrained and more restless than those who continue to be rooted in communal groups or those who have been fully incorporated into mass relations.

These poorly attached and unintegrated people are readily available for activist modes of intervention in political life and for participation in mass movements which promise them full membership in the national society.

(iii) Conclusions: Thus modern mass movements are characteristically composed of people who either

- (a) seek entry into mass society or
- (b) seek to reverse the processes of mass society.

Like mass organizations, mass movements do not build on existing social relations but instead construct direct ties between participants and leaders.

When a mass society has successfully incorporated most sections of the population into its central institutions, mass movements may become less widespread.

In a highly developed mass society mass participation is institutionalized in the form of mass organizations, especially mass parties, but also mass unions and similar associations, universal suffrage, extensive publicity of political men and events, and the official symbolism of popular government.

4. Marx and mass society theory.

Introduction: It is not the purpose of this paper to trace the parallel development of mass society theory and class theory. Rather, it is to assess the contribution of Karl Marx to the development of the theory of

mass society. Marx's contribution to the theory of social class is considerable and the theory of social class has not advanced very far since Marx. Indeed it is probably true to say that Dahrendorf's theory is only a more precise and more systematic version of Marx's. A brief summary of Marx's theory of social class follows. It is stated in terms of Dahrendorf's concepts (a procedure which in no way distorts what Marx said) and it emerges quite clearly that Marx's contribution to the theory of social class is considerable and that theoretical advances since Marx have been minimal.

Marx's theory of social class:

- (a) Sphere of production: Marx's analysis starts in the "sphere of production", or the "relations of production", or "property relations". All these expressions refer to the industrial enterprise and the social relations obtaining within it. For Marx the enterprise is the nucleus of the class war.

In terms of Dahrendorf's approach, the relevant feature is that the industrial enterprise is an imperatively coordinated association.

Marx, of course, emphasized the property aspect. This seems reasonable, in retrospect, since at his time it was legal possession of the means of production that provided both the foundation of

capitalist power and the main issue of industrial conflict; but Dahrendorf sees this as too specific an approach to the problem.

Industrial enterprise, being an imperatively coordinated association, has in it two quasi-groups which are designated as those of capital (capitalist) and of wage labour (the wage labourers).

Both capital and labour are united by certain latent interests which, being contradictory place them on the opposite sides of a conflict relation.

While the most formal objective of the opposing interests was, in capitalist society, either the maintenance or the change of the status quo of authority, the precise substance of the conflict might, in relation to the specific conditions of the period, be described as a clash between capital's profit orientation and labour's orientation towards an improvement in their material status.

The intensity of conflict in capitalist society was increased by the superimposition of authority and other factors of social status, especially income. Domination meant, for the capitalists, a high income, while subjection involved for labour extreme material hardship. There was a clear correlation between the distribution of authority and social stratification.

Obstacles in the way of organization: Despite this initial position, large obstacles were in the way of organization for both quasi-groups in the early stages of industrialization. That constellation of factors described by Dahrendorf existed:

- (i) lack of leaders and ideologies (technical conditions);
- (ii) heterogeneous modes of recruitment to authority positions (social conditions);
- (iii) in the case of labour, the absence of freedom of coalition (political conditions);

- all these held industrial conflict for some considerable time in a state of latency, in which there are only occasional attempts at organization. As industrial associations stabilize, the conditions of organization gradually emerge, and both capital and labour form organizations (Trade Unions, employers' associations) in defence of what are now articulate manifest interests. Industrial class conflict enters the manifest stage of which strikes and lockouts are the telling symptoms.

- (b) Sphere of politics: The situation described so far is that of the sphere of industry. It is characteristic of conflict in capitalist societies, however, that not only authority and social status, but also industrial and political conflicts are superimposed on one another.

The dominating groups of industry were at the same time the dominating groups of the state, either

- (i) in person,
- (ii) through members of their families, or
- (iii) by other agents.

Conversely the subjected groups of industry were as such excluded from political authority.

Industry is the dominating order of society; its structure of authority and patterns of conflict therefore extend to the whole society.

Consequently, the quasi-groups of industry also extend to the political sphere. The industrial quasi-group of capital becomes the dominant group of the state, whereas wage labour is subjected in the political sphere as well.

Since, under the particular conditions of capitalist society, conflict fronts that characterized industry and society were identical, the conflict was intensified to an extraordinary degree.

Organization: In the political field too, organization of conflict groups proved difficult in the beginning.

Insofar as industrial and political quasi-groups were identical, the same factors were at work in the state that tended to prevent industrial organization. Moreover, political restrictions,

such as electoral systems, made it difficult for the proletariat to form effective interest groups.

Thus, class conflict was smouldering beneath the surface for some time, until all restrictions fell and the two classes met openly in the political arena.

(c) Intensity of conflict:

(i) Superimposition of various lines of differentiation: By virtue of the superimposition of various lines of differentiation this conflict was extremely intense.

(ii) Mobility: Its intensity was further increased by the fact that both classes were relatively closed units. Mobility within and between generations remained an exception.

(d) Violence of conflict: Bourgeoisie and proletariat were strictly separate and largely self-recruiting groups. But in this period it was not merely the intensity of the conflict but the violence that was extraordinarily great.

In industry and the state, there were virtually no accepted modes of conflict regulation. In the absence of a democratic process that puts both parties to a conflict on an equal footing, the subjected class increasingly became a suppressed class which faced as a solid but powerless bloc the

absolute rule of the incumbents of roles of domination.

Because of this hardening of the class fronts, there were widespread demands for a complete and revolutionary change of existing structures. For structure changes could not slowly grow out of class conflict in this stage. Immobility and lack of regulation made the penetration of the ruling class by members of the subjected class impossible.

At the same time, there were neither institutional channels nor ideological provisions for the ruling class to accept and realize any of the interests of the proletariat.

Thus, it seemed justified to predict that class conflict in capitalist society tended toward both sudden and radical changes, i.e. a revolution promoted by the proletariat which replaces in one stroke the dominant groups of industry and society.

Marx and mass society theory: The main purpose of this paper, however, is to assess how Marx stands in relation to the development of the critique of mass society. In this regard two important aspects of Marx's work are relevant.

One kind of analysis which has contributed significantly to the development of the idea of mass society during the past century is the effort to distin-

guish between traditional and modern societies, a line of analysis that has become central theoretical perspective of sociology.

A second kind of analysis which has contributed significantly to the development of the idea of mass society is that which has focussed upon the analysis of the phenomenon of bureaucratic centralization.

Marx has contributed to both of these kinds of analysis. In the first case he preceded Tönnies in the use of the terms Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft and further the problem of the bureaucracy was one which concerned him throughout his life.

FOOTNOTES

¹A qualification needs to be entered here. These are ideal types, or overstated (oversimplified) models.

²Vilfredo Pareto, The Mind and Society, translated by A. Livingston and A. Bongiorno (4 vols. London: Jonathan Cape, 1935).

³Ralph Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (London: Hodge, 1947), p. 152.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁷Ralph Dahrendorf, *op. cit.*, V.

⁸*Ibid.*, VI.

⁹Daniel Bell, "The Disjunction of Culture and Social Structure," in Science and Culture, edited by Gerald Holten (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1967).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 239.

¹¹Robert A. Nisbet, The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

¹²See Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (New York: Collier, 1962).

¹³Scott Greer, "Individual Participation in Mass Society" in Approaches to the Study of Politics: Twenty-two Contemporary Essays Exploring the Nature of Politics and Methods by Which it can be Studied, edited by Roland Young (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 329-42.

¹⁴Elton Mayo, The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization (2nd ed., Boston: Harvard University, Graduate School of Business Administration, Division of Research, 1946).

¹⁵David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

¹⁶Philip Selznick, The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960).

¹⁷See Robert Presthus, The Organizational Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹⁸Philip Selznick, op. cit.

¹⁹Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behaviour," in New Outline of the Principles of Sociology, edited by Alfred M. Lee (2nd ed., rev., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951), pp. 167-222.

²⁰Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

²¹Edward Shils, "The Theory of Mass Society," in Diogenes, XXXIX, 1962, pp. 45-66.

²²William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1959).

²³Ibid.

²⁴William Kornhauser, "Mass Society," International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, X, pp. 58-64.

CHAPTER II: TRADITIONAL AND MODERN SOCIETIES

1. Introduction.

One kind of analysis which has contributed significantly to the development of the idea of mass society during the past century is the effort to distinguish between traditional and modern societies, a line of analysis that has become a central theoretical perspective of sociology.

An early formulation of this perspective was Maine's distinction between societies dominated by status relations of kinship and those dominated by contract relations of individuals. Tönnies (1887), in his highly influential analysis of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, elaborated Maine's thesis. Further evolution of this line of analysis is to be found in Durkheim's theory of social solidarity and anomie (1893; 1897) and in Max Weber's treatment of traditional and bureaucratic authority (Weber 1906-1924).

What made this kind of sociological theory relevant to the idea of mass society was its analysis of the atomization and depersonalization of social organization resulting from modernization.

Marx has also contributed significantly to this theoretical perspective. The social framework of modern

industrialized nations described by Marx is in many ways the archetype of Tönnies' Gesellschaft.

2. Marx's concept of "capitalist society".

The interpretation usually given Marx's concept of "capitalist society" is extremely narrow. The term, it is true, is used by Marx in a polemical sense, to express his condemnation of a social system with inherent exploitation and injustices. But he also uses it to describe the structure of a social order in which the strong communal organization of previous societies - for example of tribal communities or medieval towns - no longer exists.

In such societies individuals have become so separated and isolated that they establish contact only when they can use each other as means to particular ends: bonds between human beings are supplanted by useful associations, not of whole persons, but of particularized individuals.

Marx described these trends toward social atomization especially, though not exclusively, in his early writings - "On the Jewish Question", "The Holy Family", "the German Ideology", "Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law", "Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts", "Oekonomische Studien", "The Communist Manifesto", and so on. We select some statements from the "Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts and "Oekonomische Studien".

In these passages his thinking centres around Adam Smith's theory that human society is to be regarded

as a trading company and each one of its members as a merchant. Although he rejects the universal validity of Smith's view, he finds it a revealing description of contemporary industrial society. Marx calls this a caricature of true human community, since man has become so isolated that his separateness from other men is accepted as his natural form of existence and the human bond which is the essence of mankind appears to be non-essential. In this situation

the social tie which I have to you . . . is a mere semblance . . . our mutual supplementing is likewise a mere semblance.

As Marx puts the matter in another work of this period, the reality is a state in which man considers his fellow man as a means, degrades himself to a means, and so becomes a plaything of alien forces.¹

It is hard for us, according to Marx, to perceive this real condition, because it lies hidden behind a veil of appearance and ideological construction. A gulf separates our public existence from our personal existence, our roles as citizens from roles as private members of society. There is a pronounced contrast between the heaven of political doctrines and constitutional law, on the one hand, and the earthly reality of the society in which we live and act as private individuals and carry on our daily occupations, on the other hand. The former expresses the community of man; whereas the latter is

indifferent to the relation of man to man and is based on fragmentary relationships, such as those established between landowners and tenant farmer, capitalist and workman. Thus capitalist society does not embody Gemeinschaft but a state of separateness and discord, of unrestricted egotism, from which the bellum omnium contra omnes emerges.²

We have selected only a few of the numerous statements by Marx which show that, like Tönnies and others after him, he envisaged contemporary man as living in a society without human community, in a world in which he is barred from human fulfilment. This is the plight of "the dehumanized human being", of the alienated man, which was Marx's deepest concern and which became the central theme even of those of his writings which on the surface seem to deal exclusively with problems of economic history or economic theory.

Marx's theory of alienation, as suggested earlier, is closely related to his theory of ideology, and it is in the context of the theory of ideology that the theory of alienation is most usefully discussed. A brief summary of Marx's theory of ideology follows.

3. Theory of ideology.

Introduction: Its analysis of the actual relations between capitalist and democratic institutions is only part of the Marxian critique of capitalist democracy;

the other part is its explanation of the failure, widespread in capitalist society, to recognize these relations for what they are. The delusions fostered by characteristic features of the capitalist economy and the capitalist state are not corrected, but elaborated, in capitalist culture. Criticism of this culture through exposure of these delusions is a central task of the Marxian theory of ideology.

In Marxian literature the adjective "ideological" has a wider reference than the noun "ideology". Engels writes:

The state presents itself to us as the first ideological power over mankind.

Marx writes:

With the change of the economic foundation the whole enormous superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations one must always distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious aesthetic or philosophical - in short ideological - forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

The basic idea expressed in this passage, according to Lenin, is that

social relations are divided into material and ideological relations. The latter merely constitute a superstructure on the former . . .

All three writers apply the adjective to both theories and institutions.³

The noun "ideology" is applied only to theories -

to a wide variety of theories, correct and incorrect, by Lenin; to incorrect theories of a specific kind by Marx and Engels. According to Lenin's usage, some scientific theories, including Marxism, are ideologies. He writes:

In a word every ideology is historically conditioned, but it is unconditionally the case that to every scientific ideology (as contrasted, for example, with religious ideology) there corresponds an objective truth.⁴

In the usage of Marx and Engels, ideology differs from science as delusion from knowledge. In the following discussion the term: ideology is used in the sense of Marx and Engels, and not in Lenin's sense. Ideology is a theory which reflects reality incorrectly, by inverting the actual relations of thought and being. Engels writes:

Ideology is produced by the so-called thinker consciously indeed, but with a consciousness that is in error. The real forces which set him in motion remain unknown to such a thinker; otherwise this would not be an ideological process. Consequently he deludes himself with counterfeits, appearance . . . He works with mere thought material, which he accepts without examination as produced through thought; and he does not search for a more remote source which is independent of thought. Indeed he does this as a matter of course; because it seems to him that since all activity is mediated by thought, in the last analysis it is also grounded on thought.

This error results from the inversion of two interconnected relations between thought and being:

- (a) the relation of consciousness to unconsciousness,
- and

(b) the relation of abstract to concrete.⁵

Inversion of actual relations of thought and being: What is meant by inverting the relations of consciousness to unconsciousness and abstract to concrete? The clearest illustration provided by Marx and Engels can be found in their critique of Hegel.

(a) Inverting the relation of conscious to unconscious:

On inverting the relation of conscious to unconscious

Marx writes:

For Hegel the process of thinking, which under the name of the "Idea" he even transfers into an independent subject, is the creator of reality. Reality is merely the external appearance of the Idea. I hold the converse to be true. The conceptual is nothing other than the material, transposed and translated in the human head.⁶

(b) Inverting the relation of abstract to concrete: On

inverting the relation of abstract to concrete,

Engels writes:

Logical schemata can apply only to forms of thought. But the question here concerns only forms of being of the external world; and thought can never create these forms by itself but must derive them from the external world. With this, however, the whole relation is inverted. The principles are not the starting point of the inquiry, but its final results: they are not applied to nature and human history, but abstracted from them. Nature and the human realm are not regulated by these principles: instead the principles are correct only in so far as they accord with nature and history. This is the only materialistic view of the matter. Herr Duhring's opposite view is idealistic, stands the thing completely on its head, and constructs the real world out of ideas, out of categories, schemata, phantoms, existing somewhere outside the world from eternity - just like Hegel.⁷

- (c) According to Marx, it is Hegel's error concerning the relation of abstract to concrete which renders plausible his error concerning the relation of conscious to unconscious:

The concrete is concrete because it is an aggregate of many characteristics, that is, a unity of differences. It appears therefore in our thought as the product of a process of synthesis, as a result and not a starting point, although it is the starting point in reality also of observation and conception . . . Hegel fell into error in considering reality the product of self-coordinating, self-absorbed, spontaneously operating thought. For the method of advancing from abstract to concrete is merely a way of thinking in which the concrete is grasped and reproduced as concrete in our minds: it is by no means the process that produces the concrete . . . The whole as it appears in our heads as a thought whole is a product of the brain, which grasps the world in the only way possible for thinking - a way that differs from the artistic, the religious, or the practical-minded grasping of this world. But as long as we occupy our brains with it only speculatively, theoretically, the real subject continues to exist as it did before, outside our heads in its independence.⁸

In these criticisms Marx and Engels illustrate what they mean by the inversion of relations between thought and being. Hegel inverts the relation of abstract to concrete by ignoring the concrete reality from which theoretical investigation actually starts. He substitutes, as the starting point of his inquiry, abstractions which are in fact derived from that reality.

Hegel inverts the relation of conscious to unconscious by ignoring the non-mental reality to

which theoretical investigation actually returns.

He substitutes, as the subject matter of his inquiry, the mental process by which thought develops for the non-mental process by which the object of thought develops. And as the first step leads to the second, so the second leads to the third: flight from the paradox of subjectivism to the inanity of mysticism, escape into the Absolute Idea - the lion's den from which no tracks return.

Patterns of inversion: Marx and Engels analyze two main patterns of inversion, each of which exhibits a wide range of variation. The pattern which starts with inverting the relation of abstract to concrete and ends with inverting the relation of conscious to unconscious they normally call ideological.

The reverse pattern, which starts with inverting the relation of conscious to unconscious and ends with inverting the relation of abstract to concrete, they normally call fetishistic.

(a) Ideological pattern: An important family of theories constructed on the ideological pattern is the set of those which find in history the narrative of God's march in the world. According to Marx and Engels, the process of establishing the hegemony of spirit in history can be broken down into the following three steps:

1. One must separate the ideas of material individuals, ruling with empirical motives under empirical conditions, from these actual rulers, and so recognize the rule of ideas or illusions in history.
2. One must bring an order into this rule of ideas, prove a mystical connection among the successive ruling ideas; and this one accomplishes by apprehending them as "self-determinations of the Idea". (This is possible because these ideas really are connected with one another through their empirical foundation, and because, merely as ideas, they are apprehended as self-distinctions, distinctions made by thought.)
3. To remove the mystical appearance of this "self-determining Idea", one changes it into a person - "self-consciousness" - or, to seem very materialistic, into a series of persons who represent the "Idea" in history. These are "the thinkers", "the philosophers", "the ideologists"; they are also conceived to be the makers of history; "the council of guardians", the rulers. Now all the materialistic elements have been removed from history and full rein can be given the speculative steed.⁹

Inverting the relation of abstract to concrete in the first and second steps leads to inverting the relation of conscious to unconscious in the third.

(b) Fetishistic pattern: An important family of theories constructed on the fetishistic pattern is the set of those which find in economics the discovery of eternal laws of nature. The process of ascribing timeless validity to the laws of capitalist production can also be broken down into three steps.

1. First, in all exchange societies productive relations between people appear as social relations

between things. As a useful object, a table is made of wood. "But", writes Marx:

so soon as it steps forth as a commodity it is changed into a material immaterial thing. It not only stands with its feet on the ground; but in relation to all other commodities it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was . . . It is a definite social relation between men which here assumes for them the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order to find an analogy we must turn to the misty regions of the religious world. There products of the human head endowed with life of their own, as independent beings entering into relations with one another and with man. So it is in the commodity world with products of the human hand.

This inversion is the fetishism of commodities.¹⁰

2. Second, in capitalist societies class relations between producers and exploiters appear as exchange relations between factors of production, that is, between labour power and the means of production. According to Marx:

The law of capitalist accumulation, mystified by economists into a law of nature, in reality asserts only that the nature of capitalist accumulation excludes every decrease in the rate of exploitation of labour and every rise in the price of labour which could seriously endanger the continual reproduction of the capitalist relation on a continually increasing scale. It cannot be otherwise in a mode of production where the worker serves the profit requirements of existing values; instead of objective wealth serving the developmental requirements of the worker. As in religion man is governed by products of his own head, so in capitalist production he is governed by products of his own hand.

This inversion is the fetishism of capital.¹¹

3. Third, the historically conditioned exchange relations between factors of production, which are peculiar to capitalist society, appear as technologically conditioned laws of production in general, which are necessary for all societies. Marx writes:

Political economy has analyzed, however incompletely, value and the magnitude of value, and has discovered the content hidden beneath these forms. But it has never even asked why this content takes these forms; why labour is represented by the value of the product of labour, and the quantity of labour time by the magnitude of that product's value. Forms on which it is clearly written that they belong to a social formation where the process of production masters men, instead of men mastering the process of production, seem to the bourgeois consciousness of these economists as much a self-evident necessity of nature as productive labour itself. Pre-capitalist forms of social-production they treat much as the Church Fathers treated pre-Christian religions.¹²

This inversion is the identification of capitalism with nature.

Inverting the relation of conscious to unconscious in the first and second steps leads to inverting the relation of abstract to concrete in the third.

Thinking which starts by combining in different ways the complementary inversions of the actual relations of conscious to unconscious and abstract to concrete ends by combining in different ways the complementary delusions of mysticism and formalism. Marx and Engels devote more than half their theoretical writing to

critiques of rival theorists, mostly philosophers and economists.

Their critical technique, in addition to exposing errors of fact and logic, consists in laying bare the specific combination of mystical and formalist elements in each theory they examine. The dialectical method, as they practise it, is a systematic search for the concrete.¹³

It is an over-simplification, particularly misleading where the culture of capitalism is concerned, not to recognize the interpenetration of these themes. One cannot equate mysticism, inversion of relation of conscious to unconscious, and theories of the ideological pattern. Nor can one equate formalism, inversion of the relation of abstract to concrete, and theories of the fetishistic pattern. Each of the two main patterns exhibits both inversions and both illusions: they differ in the order and emphasis with which they organize a common set of errors. Proudhon shifts the final emphasis in economics from formalism to mysticism, locating the abstractions of classical economics in the consciousness of Providence.¹⁴ Feuerbach shifts the final emphasis in religion from mysticism to formalism, replacing the revelations of Christianity with the abstractions of petty-bourgeois humanism.¹⁵ Bourgeois social theorists obscure the economic foundations of politics through

continuous debate between ideologists of the rule of law and ideologists of the will to power. A striking characteristic of class cultures in general, and of capitalist cultures in particular, is the profusion and complexity of their false alternatives. Starting from this diversity, the critiques of Marx and Engels dig beneath its surface conflicts to expose the basic tensions these reflect. What the critiques show is that the culture of capitalism maximizes the interpenetration of mysticism and formalism; and its politics, the interpenetration of dictatorship and democracy; and its economics, the interpenetration of exploitation and exchange.

4. Theory of alienation.

Referent of term alienation: The characteristics of individual consciousness produced by the ideological inversions, together with the characteristics of social structure producing these inversions, Marx analyzes in his theory of alienation or estrangement.

As he uses them these terms refer to the characteristics of individual consciousness and social structure typical in societies whose members are controlled by, instead of controlling, the consequences of their collective activity.

In such societies the unintended consequences of human actions confront the actors as alien and coercive powers: men live as strangers in situations they are

increasingly compelled to change and increasingly powerless to control. The terms "alienation" and "estrangement" had been used in other connections by Hegel and his successors. Marx gave them this specific meaning in the course of developing a humanist critique of religious beliefs into a materialist critique of class society.

Stating his theoretical programme at the outset of his career, Marx takes for his starting point the explanation of religious consciousness in terms of its earthly origins already developed by the humanist successors of Hegel. He writes:

The basis of anti-religious criticism is that man makes religion, religion does not make man. Indeed religion is the self-consciousness and self-reliance of man when his actual self has not yet been discovered or has already been forgotten. But man is not an abstract essence, subsisting outside the world. Man is the world of men, his state, his society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are themselves an inverted world. Religion . . . is the fantastic realization of man's essence, because man's essence is not realized in fact. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a struggle against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma.

The task Marx sets himself is to extend the criticism of religious alienation to the criticism of its social roots. For, as he writes some twenty years later in "Capital":

The religious reflection of the real world can entirely disappear only when the circumstances of practical, everyday life offer to men none but transparently rational relations with one another and with nature.¹⁶

Sources of ideological inversions and therefore ultimately of alienated consciousness: Marx identifies three related social institutions as immediate sources of ideological inversions and therefore ultimate sources of alienated consciousness.

- (a) The first is division of labour, particularly the division between exploiters and exploited.
- (b) The second is commodity exchange, particularly exchange between exploiters and exploited.
- (c) The third is state power, particularly rule of exploiters over exploited.

In each case, he held, inversions and alienation are maximized by the institution in its capitalist form.

It will be recalled that Marx stressed Adam Smith's statement that society is a trading company and that every one of its members is a merchant. He then asks the question: What are the forces that shape this real existence of modern man? Applying Adam Smith's concept not to society as such, but to its present stage of development, Marx describes the existence of contemporary man as largely shaped by these three related social institutions.

- (a) Division of labour: Capitalism develops to its greatest extent the division of labour, obscuring through division of labour in the workshop the exploitation of proletarians by capitalists. Marx

writes of the growth of capitalist production:

The knowledge, the judgement, and the will which are developed, even though on a small scale, by the independent peasant or artisan - just as exercise of personal cunning is for the savage the entire art of war - are now required only for the workshop as a whole. The spiritual potentialities of production expand at one time, because they vanish at many others. What the detail workers lose is concentrated in the capital that confronts them. As a result of the division of labour in manufacture, the spiritual potentialities of the process of production stand opposed to the producers as the property of strangers, as a dominating power. This separation begins in simple cooperation, where the capitalist represents in opposition to the single workman the unity and will of the social working body. It is developed in manufacture, which deforms the worker into a detail worker. It is completed in large scale industry, which separates science from labour, as an independent productive potentiality, and enlists it in the service of capital.

The plan of production confronts the producer as an alien dominating power.¹⁷

- (b) Commodity exchange: Marx describes the existence of contemporary man as largely shaped by the rise and dominant influence of commodity exchange.

Marx considered the commodity to be the most elementary form of modern wealth and gave it a central position in his analysis of the economic and social features of capitalism. Both Capital and A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy open with chapters which are entitled "Commodities". We cannot present in detail Marx's theory of the commodity but can only stress its main point. Marx considers the essence of the commodity the separation

of use value from exchange value. No article, it is true, can become a commodity without having use value, that is, without having specific properties which make it fit to serve some consumer's needs. Although this use value is the prerequisite for the object's conversion into a commodity, qua commodity, the object has only exchange value, and does "not contain as much as an atom of use-value".¹⁸

Marx's description of commodity production as the basis of economic life of modern society has met with many objections. The most frequent criticism states that exchange of economic goods has been known in previous forms of society and did not start with the rise of capitalism. The argument is certainly correct to the extent that trade preceded the development of capitalist institutions, a fact which Marx not only noted but emphasized. A distinction must be made however between societies in which the exchange of goods is a more or less sporadic phenomenon and societies which are primarily geared to the production and sale of commodities. The difference is more than one of degree: it takes on a qualitative significance. Once commodity production has become the universal mode, all of man's economic activities and processes will centre around it. Its main feature, exchange value, will reach out beyond the

merely economic realm and penetrate the whole of human existence.¹⁹

This trend, Marx believes, has triumphed in the present age. Exchange value has long ceased to be merely an economic category: it has become the supreme value, the moulding force of our lives. It exerts such a strong power over our minds that it comes between us and the world which surrounds us, making it impossible for us to be directly related to persons and things. Marx describes how the rule of the commodity has brought us to feel ourselves always as potential sellers or buyers, and how owning has become our strongest link with the world:

Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is ours only if we own it . . . The sense of owning which represents the alienation of all the physical, intellectual and spiritual senses has taken the place of these senses.

Marx insists that the individual who is reduced to such a "state of absolute poverty", to a mere fragment of a human being, has become unable to approach the world in inner freedom and therefore cannot experience its fullness and richness. The person who faces the world with the acquisitive spirit, with the one-sidedness emanating from focussing on exchange value, will see that the objects tend to recoil, fending him off from true possession. As an example Marx mentions the dealer in precious stones

who can see only their commercial value but not their exquisite quality and beauty. He finds such an individual no better off than the poverty-stricken man who, absorbed in his misery, is incapable of responding to a scene of great beauty. It has been said that unshared wealth is the worst kind of poverty. In a similar vein Marx asserts:

We are excluded from true property because our property excludes the other man.

It is easy to see here the parallel between Marx's analysis of commodity production and Tönnies theory of Gesellschaft. Both thinkers come to recognize the separation between man and man as the basic characteristic of modern society. Marx finds that two relationships in particular are dominated by the trend toward separation: that between the seller and the purchaser of a commodity, and that between employer and workman. We turn first to his description of the ways in which seller and buyer associate with each other.

(1) Buyer and seller: It has often been said that capitalism has made tremendous strides toward the fulfilment of human needs. Marx would have been the last to deny this assertion. Even when he did not present his ideas with the calmness of the scholar but with the stirring passion of the revolutionary, he emphasized the great contribution of

the present economic system. It has created, he says in The Communist Manifesto,

more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together.

And he lends his description of the achievements of the bourgeoisie with the question:

What earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?

He cautions us, however, against a false inference. To state that the life of mankind would not have reached its present stage of development without commodity production is not the same as to assert that the fulfilment of human needs is the goal of commodity production. Marx makes this point by reminding us of the truism that the producers and sellers of commodities, in spite of establishing contacts with numerous individuals and providing for their wants, have no real bonds with them. They are exclusively concerned with the equivalent for the commodity they furnish. What gives your need for my article value, worth, and importance for me is solely the article which you have to offer in exchange for mine. Your need and the portion of your property that you will give are thus synonymous and of equal worth for me. Your bidding only has meaning or result as it has meaning or result in relation to me. As a mere person without goods your demand will

remain an unsatisfied aspiration for you, a baseless fancy for me. Thus as a human being, you stand in no relationship to my object since I myself have no relationship to it.²¹

All the many efforts to develop personalized salesmanship, to inject the so-called human touch into the dealings which lead up to the sale of commodities, serve only to make evident the fact that the relationship between sellers and buyers is one of means and ends. Commodity production is described by Marx as building up an elaborate system of catering to the consumer's wants while remaining truly unrelated to human need. Important as these wants are for the functioning of the economic system, the commodity producer sees them only as objects, as data on which to base his calculations and activities, as means without which he could not pursue his end. As Marx says, to the commodity producer any real or potential want appears as a weakness which can be used to draw the fly to the paper. To him every distress offers an opportunity to go over to his neighbour and to tell him under the semblance of cordiality: Friend, I will give you whatever you long for; but remember there is one condition, that you will have to pledge yourself to me in indelible ink.²²

(2) Commodity producer and workman: Even deeper than the split between seller and consumer is the separation between producer and workman. The relationship between them forms a world which has been described succinctly in Capital. Over its threshold, Marx says, is written:

'No admittance except on business' . . . The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest.

Thus the association between employer and labourer is dominated by a basic indifference to human beings, by an attitude which considers man as nothing and the product as everything.²³

This depersonalization has a deep impact on the character of the work process. It converts the workman, in Marx's words,

into a cripple, a monster, by forcing him to develop (some) highly specialized dexterity at the cost of a world of productive impulses and faculties . . . Not merely are the various partial operations allotted to different individuals, but the individual himself is split up, is transformed into the automatic motor of some partial operation.²⁴

Whereas in previous stages of economic development

the workman makes use of a tool, in the factory the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machines that he must follow. In manufacture (as Marx calls the first stage of capitalist economy) the workmen are parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage.

Marx states,

Factory work confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity.²⁵

This loss of freedom - not, as has often been asserted, the inequality of salaries or the labourer's low income - is Marx's deepest concern. For him the essence of human work is freedom. He says in the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts,

the animal also produces. He builds a nest, builds a shelter for himself, as for example do the bees, beavers, ants. But the animal produces only what is immediately necessary for himself and for his young. The animal produces only under the domination of immediate physical needs, while man produces even when he is free from physical needs, and produces freely for the first time when free from these needs.²⁶

The character of work, however, has changed with the rise of the modern factory. Marx states that now the worker

does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself. He therefore only feels at home with himself away from work while in work he feels estranged from himself. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy needs extraneous to it. Its alienated character is clearly shown by the fact that, as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion, it is avoided like a plague. Man (the worker) feels himself freely active in his animal functions such as eating, drinking, procreating, while in his human functions he feels ever more like an animal. The animal becomes the human and the human the animal.²⁷

It would be erroneous to conclude from this presentation that there is an easy or automatic transition from alienation to self-realization.

Especially in present-day society, man finds it impossible to return from his condition of alienation to an integration with his world (i.e. community) and with himself. To expose this condition and to reveal its causes was one of the major concerns of Marx's critique of capitalism. Marx did not consider the alienation of man to be limited to capitalist society. He did believe, however, that in a system based on capitalist commodity production man's efforts to struggle against his alienation and to become reintegrated are most likely to be doomed to failure.

In capitalist society the tendency to isolate exchange value from inherent qualities shapes our relations, not only to things, but also to human activities. Marx saw this development reaching its culmination in the realm of man's work, an insight which led to his central thesis that in present-day society man's labour power has become a commodity. Once labour has taken on the character of a commodity, work loses its meaning. The product - likewise a commodity and subject to the law of the market - remains outside of the labourer's life. Marx says:

The workman sinks his life into the object; but then it does not any longer belong to him but to the object. What the product of his work is, he is not.

The result of the labourer's externalization in his product is not only that his work becomes an object . . . but that the life with which he endowed this object faces him as something alien and hostile.

Where this condition prevails work loses its true meaning of enabling man to realize himself. It is not any longer a medium for expressing and fulfilling one's life but is only a device for securing one's livelihood. Even when this object is achieved and a high price is attained for the sale of the commodity, labour power, this price remains a surrogate, an "Ersatz". It can never take the place of the satisfaction experienced by man when he can find his own self in the products which he has created.²⁸

- (c) State power: Capitalism develops to its greatest extent state power, obscuring through universal suffrage the rule of capitalists over proletarians. Marx writes of the constitution proposed by the Paris Commune:

The unity of the nation was not to be broken; but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the state power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to represent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business.²⁹

In capitalist states the government confronts the governed as an alien, dominating power.

5. Summary.

While the views of Tönnies reveal his closeness to the Marxian position in several respects, we believe that the strongest likeness between the two writers lies in their treatment of the structure of modern society. The social framework of modern industrialized nations described by Marx is in many ways the archetype of Tönnies Gesellschaft. Furthermore, Marx's analysis is in many ways superior to that of Tönnies in that he analyzes the forces which shape the real existence of modern man.

Marx did not consider the alienation of modern man to be limited to capitalist society, although he did believe that the sources of alienation were more powerful in capitalist society than they had ever been before, and that in a system based on a capitalist economy man's efforts to struggle against his alienation and to become integrated are most likely to be thwarted and doomed to failure. Furthermore Marx did not believe that these forces of alienation would cease to operate in post-capitalist society. Indeed, on examination it is apparent that the forces of alienation described by Marx are hardly likely to end with the destruction of capitalism. Marx himself was fully aware that they could become acute as is revealed in Chapter IV which attempts to review Marx's analysis of bureaucratic centralization.

FOOTNOTES

¹Karl Marx, Oekonomische Studien. Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe, Div. I, III (Berlin: Marx-Engels Verlag, 1932), p. 536, p. 544; Karl Marx, On the Jewish Question in Selected Essays, translated by H. J. Stenning (New York: International Publishers, 1926), p. 56.

²Karl Marx, On the Jewish Question, op. cit., pp. 57-59, 74. See also Karl Marx, A Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right, in Selected Essays, translated by H. J. Stenning (New York: International Publishers, 1926), p. 436, p. 497; Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1936), p. 84; Marx to Ruge, May, 1843, in Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p. 561. Marx's use of the terms Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft in his letter to Ruge anticipates the distinction later made by Tönnies.

³Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy (London: M. Lawrence, 1934), IV, par. 19; Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1904) preface, par. 4; V. I. Lenin, Friends of the People, in Selected Works, XI (New York: International Publishers, 1943).

⁴V. I. Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, in Selected Works, op. cit., v, section 5, par. 25.

⁵Engels to Mehring, 14th July, 1893, par. 3, in Marx and Engels Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953).

⁶Karl Marx, Capital, I (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), preface, par. 17.

⁷Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), part 1, iii, par. 2.

⁸Karl Marx, Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1904), section 3, par. 1-2.

⁹Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels, German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1960), part 1, div. 1, section 2, pars. 19-22.

¹⁰Karl Marx, Capital, I, op. cit., i, section 4, pars. 1, 4.

¹¹Ibid., xxv, section 1, par. 8.

¹²Ibid., i, section 4, par. 17.

¹³For examples of such criticisms written by Marx and Engels in the formative period of their thought, see Karl Marx, A Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right, in Karl Marx, Selected Essays, translated by H. J. Stenning (New York: International Publishers, 1926). For examples of such critiques written in their maturity, see Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1936); Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy, op. cit.

¹⁴Marx to Annenkov, 28th December, 1846 in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, op. cit.; Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, op. cit., epigraph, ii, section 1.

¹⁵Engels on Marx, 19th August, 1846, in Frederick Engels, Engels on Marx, I-IV, Marx-Engels Briefwechsel, (Berling, 1949-50). Frederick Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy, op. cit., iii.

¹⁶Karl Marx, Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, in Karl Marx, Selected Essays, op. cit., par. 4; Karl Marx, Capital, I, op. cit., i, section 4, par. 15.

¹⁷Ibid., xiv, section 5, par. 3.

¹⁸Karl Marx, Capital, I, op. cit., p.44.

¹⁹See Karl Marx, Capital, I, op. cit., p. 100; Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1904), p. 53.

²⁰Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 118, p. 120; Karl Marx, Oekonomische Studien, op. cit., p. 545.

²¹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1948), section 1; Karl Marx, Oekonomische Studien, op. cit., p. 545.

²²Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, op. cit., pp. 127-28.

²³Karl Marx, Capital, I, op. cit., p. 195.

²⁴Ibid., p. 381.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 461-62, p. 389.

²⁶Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, op. cit., p. 88.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 85-86.

²⁸Ibid., p. 97.

²⁹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Civil War in France, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works, (2 vols., Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), section 3, par. 10.

CHAPTER III: BUREAUCRATIC CENTRALIZATION

1. Introduction.

A second kind of analysis has contributed significantly to the development of the idea of mass society during the past century. This is the effort to understand the phenomena of bureaucratic centralization. Marx has contributed to this source of ideas in his discussions of the state. It is in this more general context of the state that Marx's views on the phenomenon of bureaucracy will be discussed.

2. Marx and the state.

Introduction:

(a) Marx's views versus later interpretations: As in the case of so many other aspects of Marx's work, what he thought about the state has more often than not come to be seen through the prism of later interpretations and adaptations. These have long congealed into the Marxist theory of the state, or into the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state, but they cannot be taken to constitute an adequate expression of Marx's own views. This is not because these theories bear no relation to Marx's views, but rather that they emphasize some aspects of his thought to the detriment of others, and thus distort by over-

simplification an extremely complex and by no means unambiguous body of ideas. They altogether ignore certain strands in Marx's thought which are of considerable interest and importance. This does not, in itself, make later views better or worse than Marx's own: to decide this, what needs to be compared is not text with text, but text with history. This can hardly be done within the compass of this paper. But Marx is so inescapably bound up with contemporary politics, his thought is so deeply buried inside the shell of official Marxism and his name is so often invoked in ignorance by enemies and partisans alike, that it is worth asking what he, rather than Engels, or Lenin, or any other of his followers, disciples or critics, actually said and thought about the state.

- (b) Lack of a systematic treatment: Marx himself never attempted to set out a comprehensive and systematic theory of the state. In the later 1850's he wrote that he intended, as part of a vast scheme of projected work, of which Capital was only to be the first part, to subject the state to systematic study.¹

But of this scheme, only one part of Capital was in fact completed. His ideas on the state must therefore be taken from such historical pieces de

circumstance as The Class Struggles in France, the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and The Civil War in France, and from his incidental remarks on the subject in his other works.

On the other hand, the crucial importance of the state in his scheme of analysis is well shown by his constantly recurring reference to it in almost all of his writings; and the state was also a central preoccupation of the "young Marx": his early work from the late 1830's and to 1844 was largely concerned with the nature of the state and its relation to society. His most sustained piece of work until 1844 and the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts, apart from his doctoral dissertation, was his Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right, of which only the Introduction, actually written after the critique itself, has so far appeared in English.² It is in fact largely through his critique of Hegel's view of the state that Marx completed his emancipation from the Hegelian system. This early work of Marx on the state is of great interest; for, while he soon moved beyond the views and positions he had set out there, some of the questions he had encountered in his examination of Hegel's philosophy recur again and again in his later writings.

Classical Marxist view of the state.

(a) Early views on the state: Hegelian imprint: Marx's earliest views on the state bear a clear Hegelian imprint. In the articles which he wrote for the Rheinische Zeitung from May 1842 to March 1843 he repeatedly spoke of the state as the embodiment of freedom.

Modern philosophy, he writes in July, 1842, considers the state as the great organism in which must be realized juridical, moral and political freedom and where the individual citizen, in obeying the laws of the state only obeys the natural law of his own reason, of human reason.³

On the other hand, he also shows himself to be well aware that this exalted view of the state is in contradiction with the state's actual behaviour.

a state which is not the realization of rational freedom is a bad state⁴

he writes, and in his articles on the Rhineland Diet's repressive legislation against the pilfering of forest wood, he eloquently denounces the Diet's denial of the customary rights of the poor and condemns the assignation to the state of the role of servant of the rich against the poor. This, he holds, is a perversion of the state's true purpose and mission; private property may wish to degrade the state to its own level of concern, but any modern state, in so far as it remains true to its own meaning, must, confronted with such pretensions, cry out

your ways are not my ways, and your ideas are not my ideas.⁵

(b) External pressures on state: More and more, however, Marx found himself driven to emphasize the external pressures upon the state's actions. Writing in January 1843 on the plight of the wine growers of the Moselle, he remarks that

in the examination of the institutions of the state, one is too tempted to overlook the concrete nature of circumstances and to explain everything by the will of those empowered to act.⁶

It is this same insistence on the need to consider the "concrete nature of circumstances" which lies at the core of the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, which Marx wrote in 1843, after the Rheinische Zeitung had been closed down. By then, his horizons had widened to the point where he spoke confidently of a break in the existing society, to which

the system of acquisition and commerce, of ownership and of exploitation of man is leading even more rapidly than the increase in population.⁷

Hegel's "absurdity", he also writes in the Critique is that he views the affairs and the activities of the state in an abstract fashion; he forgets that the activities of the state are human functions:

the affairs of the state, etc., are nothing but the modes of existence and activity of the social qualities of men.⁸

The burden of Marx's critique of Hegel's con-

cept of the state is that Hegel, while rightly acknowledging the separation of civil society from the state, asserts their reconciliation in the state itself. In his system, the "contradiction" between the state and society is resolved in the supposed representation in the state of society's true meaning and reality; the alienation of the individual from the state, the contradiction between man as a private member of society, concerned with his own private interests, and as a citizen of the state, finds resolution in the state as the expression of society's ultimate reality.

But this, says Marx, is not a resolution but a mystification. The contradiction between the state and society is real enough. Indeed, the political alienation which it entails is the central fact of modern bourgeois society, since man's political significance is detached from his real private condition, while it is in fact this condition which determines him as a social being, all other determinations appearing to him as external and inessential:

real man is the private man of the present constitution of the state.⁹

But the mediating elements which are supposed in Hegel's system, to ensure the resolution of this contradiction - the sovereign, the bureaucracy, the middle classes, the legislature - are not in the

least capable, says Marx, of doing so. Ultimately, Hegel's state, far from being above private interests and from representing the general interest, is in fact subordinate to private property. What, asks Marx, is the power of the state over private property? The state has only the illusion of being determinant, whereas it is in fact determined; it does, in time, subdue private and social wills, but only to give substance to the will of private property and to acknowledge its reality as the highest reality of the political state, as the highest moral reality.¹⁰

In the Critique, Marx's own resolution of political alienation and of the contradiction between the state and society is still envisaged in mainly political, i.e. in the framework of "true democracy".

Democracy is the solution to the riddle of all constitutions; in it the constitution appears in its true reality, as the free product of man. All other political systems are specific, definite, particular political forms. In democracy, the formal principle is also the material principle. It constitutes, therefore, the real unity of the universal and the particular.¹¹

Marx also writes:

In all states which differ from democracy, the state, the law, the constitution are sovereign without being properly dominant, that is to say without materially affecting the other non-political spheres. In democracy, the constitution, the law, the state itself are only the people's self-determination, a specific aspect of it, in so far as that aspect has a political constitution.¹²

Democracy is here intended to mean more than a specific political form, but Marx does not yet

define what else it entails. The struggle between monarchy and republic, he notes, is still a struggle within the framework of what he calls the "abstract state", i.e. the state alienated from society; the abstract political form of democracy in the republic:

Property and all that makes up the content of law and the state is, with some modifications, the same in the United States as in Prussia; the republic in America is thus only a purely political form as is the monarchy in Prussia.¹³

In a real democracy, however, the constitution ceases to be purely political; indeed Marx quotes the opinion of "some modern Frenchmen" to the effect that "in a real democracy the political state disappears".¹⁴ But the concrete content of "true democracy" remains here undefined.

(c) Political emancipation versus human emancipation:

The Critique already suggests the belief that political emancipation is not synonymous with human emancipation. The point, which is, of course, central to Marx's whole system, was made explicit in the two articles which he wrote for the Franco-German Annals, namely

(i) the Jewish Question, and

(ii) the Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.

(i) Jewish Question: In the first essay, Marx criticizes Bruno Bauer for confusing political and human emancipation, and notes that "the

limit of political emancipation is immediately apparent in the fact that the state may well free itself from some constraint, without man himself being really freed from it, and that the state may be a free state without man being free".¹⁵

Even so, political emancipation is a great advance; it is not the last form of human emancipation, but is the last form of human emancipation within the framework of the existing social order.¹⁶

Human emancipation, on the other hand, can only be realized by transcending bourgeois society,

which has torn up all genuine bonds between men replaced them by selfishness, selfish need, and dissolved the world of men into a world of atomized individuals, hostile towards each other.¹⁷

The more specific meaning of that emancipation is defined in the Jewish Question, in Marx's strictures against "Judaism", here deemed synonymous with trade, money and commercial spirit which has come to affect all human relations. On this view, the political emancipation of the Jews, which Marx defends¹⁸, does not produce their social emancipation; this is only possible in a new society, in which practical need has been humanized and the commercial

spirit abolished.¹⁹

(ii) Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: In the Introduction, which he wrote in Paris at the end of 1843 and the beginning of 1844, Marx now spoke of the "doctrine, that man is for man the supreme being" and of the "categorical imperatives" which required the overthrow of all conditions in which "man is a degraded, enslaved, abandoned and contemptible being".²⁰ But he also added another element to the system he was constructing, namely the proletariat as the agent of the dissolution of the existing social order;²¹ as we shall see, this view of the proletariat is not only crucial for Marx's concept of revolution but also for his view of the state.

By this time, Marx had already made an assessment of the relative importance of the political realm from which he was never to depart and which also had some major consequences for his later thought. On the other hand, he does not wish to underestimate the importance of "political emancipation", i.e. of political reforms tending to make politics and the state more liberal and democratic.

The Holy Family: Thus, in the Holy Family, which he wrote in 1844 in collaboration with Engels, Marx

describes the "democratic representative state" as "the perfect modern state"²², meaning the perfect modern bourgeois state, its perfection arising from the fact that "the public system is not faced with any privileged exclusivity"²³, i.e. economic and political life are free from feudal encumbrance and constraints.

But there is also, on the other hand, a clear view that political emancipation is not enough, and that society can only be made truly human by the abolition of private property.

It is natural necessity, essential human properties, however alienated they may seem to be, and interest that holds the members of civil society together; civil, not political life is their real tie. It is therefore not the state that holds the atoms of civil society together . . . only political superstition today imagines that social life must be held together by the state, whereas in reality the state is held together by civil life.²⁴

The modern democratic state

is based on emancipated slavery, on bourgeois society . . . the society of industry, of universal competition, of private interest freely following its aims, of anarchy, of the self-alienated natural and spiritual individuality . . . ;²⁵

the "essence" of the modern state is that

it is based on the unhampered development of bourgeois society, on the free movement of private interest.²⁶

(d) Crystallization of view of state as an instrument of class rule:

(i) The German Ideology: A year later, in The

German Ideology Marx and Engels defined further the relation of the state to bourgeois society,

By the mere fact that it is a class and no longer an estate, the bourgeoisie is forced to organize no longer locally but nationally, and to give a general form to its mean average interest;

this "general form" is the state, defined as

nothing more than the form of organization which the bourgeois necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interest.²⁷

(ii) Poverty of Philosophy: This same view is confirmed in The Poverty of Philosophy of 1847, where Marx again states that

political conditions are only the official expression of civil society,

and goes on:

It is the sovereigns who in all ages have subject to economic conditions, but it is never they who have dictated laws to them. Legislation, whether political or civil, never does more than proclaim, express, in words, the will of economic relations.²⁸

(iii) Communist Manifesto: This whole trend of thought on the subject of the state finds its most explicit expression in the famous formulation of the Communist Manifesto:

The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie²⁹;

and political power is

merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another.³⁰

(e) Conclusions: This is the classical Marxist view on the subject of the state, and it is the only one which is to be found in Marxist-Leninism. It is the view which is fully in accord with Marx's class model of society. In regard to Marx himself, however, it only constitutes what might be called a primary view of the state. For, as has occasionally been noted in discussions of Marx and the state,³¹ there is to be found another view of the state in his work, which it is inaccurate to hold up as of similar status with the first,³² but which is none the less of great interest, not least because it serves to illuminate, and indeed provided an essential context for, certain major elements in Marx's system, notably the problem of the bureaucracy, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the whole question of the nature of political power in post-capitalist society.

This secondary view is that of the state as independent from and superior to all social classes, as being the dominant force in society rather than the instrument of a dominant class.

Secondary view of state.

(a) Qualification of primary view: It may be useful, for a start, to note some qualifications which Marx made even to his primary view of the state. For in relation to the two most advanced capitalist countries of the day, England and France, he often makes the

point that, at one time or another, it is not the ruling class as a whole, but a fraction of it, which controls the state;³³ and that those who actually run the state may well belong to a class which is not the economically dominant class.³⁴

Marx does not suggest that this fundamentally affects the state's class character and its role of guardian and defender of the interests of property; but it obviously does introduce an element of flexibility in his view of the operation of the state's bias, not least because the competition between different factions of the ruling class may well make easier the passage of measures favourable to labour, such as the Ten Hours Bill.³⁵

- (b) Bonapartism: The extreme manifestation of the state's independent role is, however, to be found in authoritarian personal rule, Bonapartism. Marx's most extensive discussions of this phenomenon occur in The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, which was written between December 1851 and March 1852. In this historical study, Marx sought very hard to pin down the precise nature of the rule which Louis Bonaparte's coup d'etat had established.

The coup d'état he wrote was

the victory of Bonaparte over parliament, of the executive power over the legislative power;

in parliament, the nation made its general will the law, that is, made the law of the ruling class its general will; in contrast, before the executive power it renounces all will of its own and submits to the superior command of an alien will, to authority;

France, therefore, seems to have escaped the despotism of a class only to fall back beneath the despotism of an individual and what is more, beneath the authority of an individual without authority. The struggle seems to be settled in such a way that all classes, equally impotent and equally mute, fall on their knees before the rifle butt.³⁶

Marx then goes on to speak of

this executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its ingenious state machinery, embracing wide strata, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores.³⁷

This bureaucratic power, which sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, had, he wrote, first been

the means of preparing the class rule of the bourgeoisie, while under the Restoration, under Louis Phillipe, under the parliamentary Republic, it was the instrument of the ruling class, ³⁸ however much it strove for power of its own.

But the coup d'etat had seemingly changed its role:

only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself completely independent; as against civil society, the state machine has consolidated its position so thoroughly that the chief of the Society of December 10 (i.e. Louis Bonaparte) suffices for its head³⁹

This appears to commit Marx to the view of the Bonapartist state as independent of any specific class and as superior to society. But he then goes

on to say, in an often quoted phrase:

And yet the state power is not suspended in mid-air. Bonaparte represents a class, and the most numerous class of French peasants at that, the small-holding peasants.⁴⁰

However, their lack of cohesion makes these

incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name whether through parliament or a convention;⁴¹

they therefore require a representative who

must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and send them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power subordinating society to itself.⁴²

"Represents" is here a confusing word. In the context, the only meaning that may be attached to it is that the small-holding peasants hoped to have their interests represented by Louis Bonaparte. But this does not turn Louis Bonaparte or the state into the mere instrument of their will; at the most, it may limit the executive's freedom of action somewhat. Marx also writes that:

as the executive authority which has made itself an independent power, Bonaparte feels it is his mission to safeguard "bourgeois order". But the strength of this bourgeois order lies in the middle class. He looks on himself, therefore, as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew;

and again,

as against the bourgeoisie, Bonaparte looks on himself, at the same time, as the representative of the peasants and of the people in general, who wants to make the lower classes of the people happy within the frame of bourgeois society . . . But, above all, Bonaparte looks on himself as the chief of the Society of 10 December, as the representative of the lumpenproletariat to which he himself, his entourage, his government and his army belong . . .⁴³

On this basis, Louis Napoleon may "represent" this or that class (and Marx stresses the "contradictory task" of the man and the "contradictions of his government, the confused groping about which seeks now to win, now to humiliate first one class and then another and arrays all of them uniformly against him . . .⁴⁴); but his power of initiative remains very largely unimpaired by the specific wishes and demands of any one class or fraction of a class.

On the other hand, this does not mean that Bonapartism, for Marx, is in any sense neutral as between contending classes. It may claim to represent all classes and to be the embodiment of the whole of society. But it does in fact exist, and has been called into being, for the purpose of maintaining and strengthening the existing social order and the domination of capital over labour. Bonapartism and the Empire, Marx wrote much later in The Civil War in France, had succeeded the bourgeois Republic precisely because

it was the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeois had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of ruling the nation.⁴⁵

It was precisely under its sway that

bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself.

Finally, Marx then characterizes what he calls "imperialism", by which he means Napoleon's imperial regime, as

at the same time, the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labour by capital.⁴⁷

(c) The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: In The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, written a year after Marx's death, Engels also notes:

By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both.⁴⁸

But the independence of which he speaks would seem to go much further than anything Marx had in mind; thus Engels refers to the Second Empire,

which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat,

and to Bismarck's German Empire, where

capitalists and workers are balanced against each other and equally cheated for the benefit of the impoverished Prussian cabbage junkers.⁴⁹

For Marx, the Bonapartist state, however it may have been politically from any given class, remains and cannot in a class society but remain, the protector of an economically and socially dominant class.

Asiatic Mode of Production.

1) Introduction.

(a) Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx has devoted a long and involved passage to the bureaucratic element in the state, and its attempt "to transform the purpose of the state into the purpose of the bureaucracy and the purpose of the bureaucracy into the purpose of the state".⁵⁰

But it was only in the 1850's that he began to look closely at a type of society where the state appeared to be genuinely "above society", namely societies based on the "Asiatic mode of production", whose place in Marx's thought has recently attracted much attention.⁵¹

What had, in the Critique, been a passing reference to the

despotic states of Asia, where the political realm is nothing but the arbitrary will of a particular individual, where the political realm, like the material is enslaved,⁵²

had, by 1859, become one of Marx's four main stages of history.

(b) A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:

Marx wrote in the famous Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:

In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society.⁵³

The countries Marx was mainly concerned with in this connection were India and China, and also Russia as a "semi-Asiatic" or "semi-Eastern" state.

The Asiatic mode of production, for Marx and Engels, has one outstanding characteristic, namely the absence of private property in land. Marx wrote to Engels in 1853,

this is the real key even to the Oriental heaven . . .⁵⁴

He noted:

In the Asiatic form (or at least predominantly so), there is no property, but individual possession; the community is properly speaking the real proprietor.⁵⁵

In Asiatic production he also remarked, it is the state which is the "real landlord".⁵⁶

In this system, he also wrote later, the direct producers are

not confronted by a private landowner but rather, as in Asia (are) under direct subordination to a state which stands over them as the landlord and simultaneously as sovereign.

He went on:

the state is then the supreme lord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. But, on the other hand, no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land.⁵⁷

A prime necessity of the Asiatic mode of production, imposed by climate and territorial conditions was artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks; indeed, Marx wrote, this was

the basis of Oriental agriculture. In countries like Flanders and Italy the need of an economical and common use of water drove private enterprise into voluntary associations; but it requires in the Orient, where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary associations, the interference of the centralized power of government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic governments, the functions of providing public works.⁵⁸

(c) Grundrisse: Finally, in the Grundrisse, Marx speaks of

the despotic government which is poised above the lesser communities,⁵⁹

and describes that government as the

all-embracing unity which stands above all these small common bodies . . . since the unity is the real owner, and the real pre-condition of common ownership, it is perfectly possible for it to appear as something separate and superior to numerous real, particular communities . . . the despot here appears as the father of all the numerous lesser communities, thus realizing the common unity of all.⁶⁰

It is therefore evident that Marx does view the state, in the conditions of Asiatic despotism, as the dominant force in society, independent of

and superior to all its members, and that those who control its administration are society's authentic rulers. This then is Marx's view of Asiatic society reduced to its essentials. His analysis of the central role of the political bureaucracy is essentially functional in nature.

After this brief summary, I will outline in more detail Marx's view on the Asiatic mode of production to show the evolution of his thoughts and his continuing concern with the problem of bureaucracy.

2) Communist Manifesto.

Marx's first comments on Asiatic society are in the Communist Manifesto where he gives qualified approval to the capitalist form of progress, though without idealizing it and while stressing its catastrophic impact on backward countries and exploited classes. He observes that capitalism

batters down all Chinese walls and compels all nations on pain of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production.
(C/f Marx-Engels, "Selected Works", Moscow, 1958, vol. 1, p. 38)

The reference to Chinese walls is scarcely accidental: when Marx drafted the Manifesto the first Opium War had recently been fought, and there is a characteristic remark in the same passage on "the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners", which "the

bourgeoisie" has to overcome in its relentless march to world domination: the process whereby it "draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization".

Whatever they thought of the means whereby this result was accomplished, the distinction between Eastern barbarians (or "stagnation") and Western progress ("civilization") was one that Marx and Engels in 1848 had no intention of questioning.

3) Marx in the 1850's.

When we turn to the writings composed by Marx - with some assistance from Engels - in the early 1850's, we encounter the same attitude towards "progress" that had already characterized the Manifesto, plus a special undertone arising from the fact that both men were then settled in England and commenting upon British colonial affairs in the New York Daily Tribune.

Their strictures upon British rule in India, or the British Government's behaviour towards China, are substantially in tune with the "bourgeois" radicalism of the period, and in some respects anticipate the standard anti-colonialism of later American writings.

Marx's caustic comments on British colonial policy clearly went down well with his American readers for reasons which had little to do with his own theoretical approach.

In some respects indeed he took a more tolerant

view of British rule than they did, since he tended to regard the impact of capitalism upon Oriental society as beneficial in the long run, whereas the New York Daily Tribune's line reflected an anti-industrial bias which he did not share. Thus on June 14th, 1853, we find him writing to Engels ("Selected Correspondence", Moscow, 1956, p. 101-2):

The Tribune of course trumpets Carey's book with all its might. Both indeed have this in common that under the guise of Sismondian-philanthropic-socialistic anti-industrialism they represent the protectionist, i.e., the industrialist bourgeoisie of America. This also explains the secret why the Tribune despite its "isms" and its socialistic humbug, can be the "leading journal" in the U.S.A. . . . I have continued this camouflaged warfare in a first article on India, in which the destruction of the native industry by England is described as revolutionary. This will be very shocking to them.

India:

- (a) "British Rule in India" (New York Daily Tribune, June 25th, 1853): The above reference is to an article entitled "British Rule in India" which appeared in the New York Daily Tribune on June 25th, 1853, and in which Marx for the first time expressed a considered opinion about the nature of Oriental society. It is amusing to find that one of the key ideas of this important article had been suggested by an impromptu remark dropped by Engels. On June 6th, 1853, in a letter to Marx on the general subject of Oriental history,⁶¹ Engels had

thrown out the suggestion that:

an Oriental government never had more than three departments: finance (plunder at home), war (plunder at home and abroad), and public works (provision for reproduction). The British Government in India has administered numbers one and two in a rather more philistine fashion and dropped number three entirely, so that Indian agriculture is being ruined.

Marx incorporated these observations in his article, and went on to outline some ideas on the genesis of Oriental society and the "Asiatic mode of production":

Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert extending from the Sahara through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture . . . This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which in the Occident drove private enterprise to voluntary associations as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated in the Orient, where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works.⁶²

For Marx and Engels this state of affairs ("the Hindu . . . leaving like all Oriental peoples to the Central Government the care of the great public works . . .") was connected with a circumstance to which Marx refers in the same article, namely the dispersion of the population in small centres by the domestic union of agricultural and manufacturing pursuits,

i.e. in self-governing villages; now these units, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, their inhabitants being totally indifferent to what went on around them including massacres and foreign invasions.⁶³

It was this passivity which has made despotism possible in the first place. But how had this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life . . . this passive sort of existence come into being? The exchange of letters hints at an answer.

- (b) Letter from Marx to Engels: On June 2nd, 1853, Marx observes, a propos of Francois Bernier's eighteenth century Travels Containing a Description of the Dominions of the Great Mogul:

Bernier rightly considers the basis (Grundform) of all Oriental phenomena - he refers to Turkey, Persia, Hindustan - to be the absence of private property in land. This is the real key, even to the Oriental heaven.

- (c) Letter from Engels to Marx: Engels echoes this judgement in his letter of June 6th:

. . . The absence of property in land is indeed the key to the entire Orient. Herein lies the political and religious history. But how does it come about that the Orientals did not arrive at landed property, even in its feudal form? I think it is mainly due to the climate, taken in connection with the nature of the soil, especially the great stretches of desert . . . Artificial irrigation is here the first condition of agriculture, and this is a matter either for the communes, the provinces, or the central government.

Follow the remarks about the character of Oriental rule which have already been quoted and which Marx reproduced in his article.

Summary so far: At this stage, then, Marx and Engels are agreed that

- (a) there is no Oriental feudalism;
- (b) its absence is synonymous with the non-existence of private landed property, which in turn is due to climatic and soil conditions;
- (c) the centralized Oriental despotism has arisen from the need to provide artificial irrigation;
- (d) the forcible destruction of the system by the British, whatever its motivation, is about to introduce the preconditions of "progress" in the Western sense, albeit at immense cost.

In the Hegelian manner, Marx in his article poses the historical problem philosophically ("The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England, she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution"). But in the present context this is immaterial, except in so far as it supplies the explanation of his readiness to include the destruction of Indian handicrafts among the faux frais of history.

The real theoretical problem lies elsewhere.

When Marx, in a subsequent article on India (New York Daily Tribune, August 8th, 1853; C/f Marx-Engels "Selected Works", vol.1, p. 356) looks forward to the time when the Indian will "reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie", he is simply being "progressive" in a manner which today permits every Asian nationalist to applaud him, especially since he also alludes to the time when "the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke".

But if Marx had been merely another nineteenth-century progressive his views would not command special interest. The question is what can be made of his scattered and unsystematic notions about Oriental society and the "Asiatic mode of production".

China:

Before turning to this theme it may be as well to round off the factual account with some quotations from Marx's references to China which date from roughly the same period, i.e. the 1850's. In this connection little weight need be given to his (or Engel's) humorous forecast of a time to come when the last European reactionaries, having taken refuge in Asia, and finally reached that ancient bastion of conservatism, the Great Wall of China, would inscribed upon its gates find the dreadful words:

"République chinoise - Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité."⁶⁴

If the joke shows anything, it is that to Marx and Engels in 1850 "the revolution" signified what it did to all their democratic contemporaries.⁶⁵

They observe with a touch of condescension:

Chinese socialism may stand in the same relation to European socialism as does Chinese philosophy to that of Hegel. But it is nonetheless an amusing circumstance (sic) that the oldest and most unshakable empire on earth should within eight years have been brought by the cotton-bales of the English bourgeoisie to the eve of a social revolution which cannot fail to have the most important consequences for civilization.

That Marx and Engels regarded this prospect as "amusing" as well as inevitable testifies not only to the sense of security and superiority which they shared with most other Europeans but also to their intellectual descent from Hegel.

Marx's essential Hegelianism, whenever he has occasion to discuss the probable fate of an ancient and now stagnant civilization, is well exemplified by the concluding passage of one of his articles on China in the later 1850's: New York Daily Tribune, September 20th, 1858:

While the semi-barbarian stood on the principle of morality, the civilized opposed to him the principle of self. That a giant empire containing almost one third of the human race, vegetating in the teeth of time, insulated by the forced exclusion of general intercourse, and thus contriving to dupe itself with delusions of Celestial perfection - that such an empire should at least be overtaken by fate on the occasion of a deadly duel in which the representative of the antiquated world appears prompted by ethical motives, while the representative of the overwhelming society fights for the privilege of buying in the cheapest

and selling in the dearest markets - this indeed is a sort of tragical couplet, stranger than any poet would have dared to fancy.⁶⁶

This elegiac note is struck repeatedly in the writings he devoted to China in 1858 and 1859, while the struggle to "open up" the Treaty Ports was in progress, but it is only towards the end of this period that Marx, - now in the throes of drafting his major economic work, and with the Critique of Political Economy already behind him - pulls the strands of his theoretical argument together:

New York Daily Tribune, December, 1859:

It is the same combination of husbandry with manufacturing industry which for a long time withstood, and still checks, the export of British wares to East India; but there the combination was based upon a peculiar constitution of the landed property which the British, in their position of the supreme landlords of the country, had it in their power to undermine, and thus forcibly convert part of the Hindu self-sustaining communities into mere farms producing opium, cotton, indigo, hemp, and other raw materials, in exchange for British stuffs. In China the English have not yet wielded this power nor are they likely ever to do so.⁶⁷

Conclusions:

Oriental society is clearly something more complex than a system of canals. It has to do

- (i) on the one hand, with centralized i.e. despotic, regulation of the basic economic functions, and
- (ii) on the other, with the prevalence of the self-sufficient village economy.

But still the key, as we have seen earlier, has to be

sought in the "absence of private property in land".

4) The Asiatic Society (Historical analysis)

(a) Preface to the Critique of Political Economy:

In January, 1859, when writing the Preface to The Critique of Political Economy, Marx for the first (and last) time gave a summary of his method that indicates the exact relationship in which the economic process ("the mode of production of material life") stands to the historical process generally; and it is here, towards the close of the new classic formulation of the "materialist conception of history", that he introduces his four historical stages:

In broad outlines, Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society.

He was never again to display a similar degree of certainty in assigning their relative place to those forms of society which had embodied their characteristic features in defining stages of recorded history. Yet the general standpoint laid down in the Preface was not superseded or even substantially modified.

There are four and only four major historical epochs, the Asiatic being the first, and each corresponds to a definite social order which in

turn lays the foundation for the succeeding one. These two aspects are internally related, but must nonetheless for analytical purposes be considered separately.

- (b) Distinguishing features of Asiatic Society: To start, then, with the "Asiatic mode" taken by itself, we have already seen what features can be said to distinguish it.

Engels: Engels distinguished two:

- (i) climatic conditions, and
- (ii) the pervasive habits of an Oriental government.

Marx: Marx expanded these hints into a system by tracing the peculiar character of Oriental society to the absence of private land ownership. He related this to the overriding role of the central government by suggesting that under the "Asiatic system" the state was the "real landlord".⁶⁸

So far as private property in land is concerned we are left in no doubt what Marx thought of its role in dissolving the "Asiatic mode", since in the second and concluding of his important Tribune articles on British rule in India he expressly describes it as

the great desideratum of Asiatic society,⁶⁹
for the sake of which the infamies practised by the Indian zaminder and ryotwar systems, "abomin-

able as they are", should nonetheless be regarded as a step towards the emancipation of Indian society.

State: Now what of the rôle played by the State? That in Asia it was the "real landlord" Marx never doubted. For proof we have the passage in Capital, Volume III, where he refers to the situation of the producers being confronted not by a private landowner but

rather, as in Asia, under direct subordination to a state which stands over them as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign.⁷⁰

These characteristics of "Asiatic society" -

(i) state control over the producer, and

(ii) absence of private property in land -

are presumably related to the strategic role of the central government in administering the irrigation system, but how does this complex inter-relationship come about historically? Engels never bothered about such difficult questions, but from Marx we are entitled to expect an answer. Let us see how far he has provided one.

(c) Historical evolution: An indirect clue is afforded by his observation that where the small peasants "form among themselves a more or less natural production community, as they do in India . . . the surplus labour for the nominal

owner of the land can only be extorted from them by other than economic pressure, whatever the form assumed may be."⁷¹

This is followed by the remark about the state sovereign doubling as landlord, so that taxes and groundrent coincide. Marx then continues:

Under such circumstances there need exist no harder political or economic dependence than that common to all subjection to the state. The state is here the supreme landlord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. Conversely no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land.⁷²

Conquest? Does this point in the direction of a theory of conquest or some other form of political usurpation which blocks the emergence of "true" private ownership of land, leaving the subject peasant population only with possession and use?

The puzzling thing is that the immediately following sentence states:

The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of (the) direct producers determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and in turn reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, (and) therewith simultaneously its specific political form.⁷³

Other parts of the same lengthy passage

refer to serfdom and similar forms of socio-economic bondage. It must be borne in mind that Volume III of Capital was pieced together by Engels from unfinished drafts.

Even so it remains uncertain how Marx envisaged the historical genesis of a relationship which counterpoises the State as supreme landlord to the peasant producer.

He makes it quite clear, however, that it is the dominance of the state which excludes genuine private ownership of land, i.e. the precondition of feudalism. If anything defines "the Orient" according to Marx (and Engels) it is this

supremacy of the State which reduces the landowners to the role of merely 'nominal landlords'

as Marx calls them.

There cannot then have been any genuine Oriental feudalism, at any rate not in India and China, the two Asian countries to which Marx had given some systematic attention. That he regarded their problems as broadly similar appears from a passage in Capital, Volume III, where he refers to the impact of European commerce upon Eastern societies:

The obstacles presented by the internal solidarity and organization of pre-capitalistic, national modes of production to the corrosive influence of commerce are strikingly illustrated in the intercourse of the English with India and China. The broad basis of the modes of production here is formed by the unity of small-scale agriculture and home industry, to which in India we should add the form of village communities built upon the common ownership of land, which incidentally was the original form in China as well. In India the English lost no time in exercising their direct political and economic power, as rulers and landlords, to disrupt these small economic communities. English commerce exerted a revolutionary influence on these communities and tore them apart only insofar as the low prices of its goods served to destroy the spinning and weaving industries which were an ancient integrating element of this unity of industrial and agricultural production. Even so this work of dissolution proceeds very gradually. And still more slowly in China, where it is not reinforced by direct political power. The substantial economy and saving in time afforded by the association of agriculture with manufacture put up a stubborn resistance to the products of the big industries whose prices include the faux frais of the circulation process which pervades them. Unlike the English, Russian commerce, on the other hand, leaves the economic ground-work of asiatic production untouched.⁷⁴

The interest of this passage is that it shows Marx, in the 1860's and while at work on Capital, reverting to the theme of his early newspaper articles.

He does so also in a footnote in which the "absurd (in practice infamous) economic experiments" conducted by the British in India are duly condemned, with special reference to the erection of "a caricature of large-scale English estates" in

Bengal.⁷⁵ Yet we have seen that in 1853 he had described private property in land as "the great desideratum of Asiatic society", and expressly mentioned the zamindars.

There is of course no contradiction if one bears in mind that for Marx the rupture of India's ancient stagnation involved the payment of a terrible price in exploitation and dislocation. But the new stress in Capital on the futility and absurdity of these "economic experiments", together with the reference to the solidity of the ancient social structure built upon the union of farming and handicrafts, does strike rather a different note.

When he remarks that

In the north-west they (i.e. the English) did all they could to transform the Indian economic community with common ownership⁷⁶ of the soil into a caricature of itself,

he seems to be saying, or at least hinting, that but for this outside interference the village community might have evolved in a sounder direction. Then there is the passing reference to the economic saving inherent in small-scale enterprise as against the faux frais of modern large-scale industry - this last a familiar theme in socialist literature since Fourier, but one to which Marx

normally did not give a great deal of attention. Altogether the tone of this passage seems to anticipate his well-known observations upon the prospects of the Russian village community in the 1880's: there is a hint of "Narodicism" about it.

- (d) Conclusions: It is, I think, a fair inference from these passages that while in the 1850's Marx was inclined to emphasize the progressive role of Western capitalism in disrupting Oriental stagnation, by the time he came to draft his major economic work he was less certain that traditional society embodied no positive factors.

At any rate, it may be said that by the 1860's his attitude had become ambivalent. We now find him remarking upon the stability of the ancient village communities, in a manner suggesting that he saw some genuine virtue in their peculiar mode of life. At the same time his hostility to capitalism had deepened. This is worth stressing as a qualification of the familiar statement that he had by the 1860's lost some of his early revolutionary ardour. If one has in mind his early attachment to a rather Jacobinical view of the coming of European revolution, it is true to say that he grew more moderate in the measure that he became a theorist of a genuine labour movement

with democratic aims. But at the same time he sharpened his critique of bourgeois society and the operation of capitalism as an economic system.

The Manifesto, rather paradoxically, had celebrated the triumphant march of capitalism at the same time that it proclaimed the proletariat's coming victory. By the time Marx wrote Capital he was more concerned with factory legislation than with the proletarian revolution, but this did not make him more tolerant of "the system"; rather less so. The note of indulgence has vanished, and the tone has become one of unqualified hostility and contempt.

In 1847 the bourgeoisie still gained some plaudits for battering down the Chinese walls of barbarianism; by 1867 even the "Asiatic mode" comes in for favourable comment, at any rate so far as the village community is concerned: it is valued as a bulwark against social disintegration.

5) Summary.

(a) Introduction: Here then, is something like a hiatus in the argument. To some extent the difficulty arises from the fact that the more strictly historical part of Marx's theory of Oriental society is to be found in the posthumously published draft for Das Kapital, the so-called

Grundrisse.

(b) Marx's theory of Oriental society: Marx's theory was both

- (i) historical, and
- (ii) sociological.⁷⁷

Unfortunately the theory was never formulated in systematic fashion, but has to be pieced together, notably from the Grundrisse of 1857-58, where it is chiefly employed to bring out the contrast between Oriental society and Graeco-Roman antiquity. By drawing upon all these scattered sources (including a very early work, the German Ideology of 1845-6, which throws out some interesting hints about slavery and feudalism), we arrive at something like the following:

German Ideology: The various stages in the development of the social division of labour correspond to different forms of property.⁷⁸

(a) First form: The "first form" is communal and proper to "the undeveloped stage of production where a people sustains itself by hunting and fishing, by cattle-raising or at most by farming".⁷⁹

At this stage division of labour is rudimentary and consists for the most part in a further development of the primitive division of functions inherent in the family.

The social order therefore limits itself to an extension of the family: patriarchal tribal chiefs, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family develops gradually with the growth of population and needs, and with the extension of external intercourse, both of war and barter trade.⁸⁰

- (b) Second form: This primitive tribal or communal organization is succeeded historically by a "second form" which in the 1845-6 sketch is equated with "the communal and state property of antiquity". This is said to arise particularly

from the union of several tribes to a city through contact or conquest, and while retaining slavery.

Side by side with communal property, mobile and subsequently immobile private property develops, but as an abnormal form subordinated to communal property. The citizens of the state possess power over their labouring slaves only collectively, and for this reason alone they are tied to the form of communal ownership. It is the joint private property of the active citizens who are compelled vis-a-vis the slaves to remain in this primitive manner of association.

Hence the entire organization of society based thereupon, and therewith the power of the people, decays in the same degree in which especially immobile private property develops. The division of labour is more highly developed. We already find the contrast of town and country . . . The class relationship as between citizens and slaves is fully developed.⁸¹

Marx notes as a possible objection that

the fact of conquest appears to contradict this whole conception of history,

and goes on to demonstrate that

for the conquering barbarian people, war itself is . . . a regular form of intercourse, which is exploited all the more energetically the more the growth of population together with the traditional . . . primitive mode of production arouses the demand for new means of production.⁸²

This organization finds its ultimate development in Roman society, where "Slavery remains the basis of the entire production" and the plebians "stationed between free citizens and slaves never got beyond a Lumpen-proletariat".

(c) Third form: It is succeeded by the "third form" of property, namely "feudal or estate ownership".⁸³ In other words, by the European middle ages.

Preface to the Critique of Political Economy: In 1845-6 Marx had not yet discovered Oriental society and the "Asiatic mode"; consequently he mentions only three pre-modern stages:

- (i) tribal society,
- (ii) classical antiquity founded on slavery,
- (iii) European feudalism.

By 1859 the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy presents four stages corresponding to different forms of property:

- (i) Asiatic society,
- (ii) antiquity,
- (iii) feudalism, and
- (iv) modern bourgeois society.

Tribal society has disappeared, to be subsequently resurrected by Engels.⁸⁴

Grundrisse:⁸⁵ Now the 1859 work is based on the unpublished Grundrisse of 1857-8, and when we turn to this source we obtain some light on how Marx had in the meantime come to regard the relationship of the Orient and the "Asiatic mode" to primitive tribal society on the one hand, and to classical antiquity and European feudalism on the other.

His economic studies had acquainted him with the researches of the British school, and what we now get is a picture in which the skeleton of the "materialist" conception of history is fleshed out with economics.

(a) Historical analysis: True to his method, the approach is historical.

1. Oriental society: Marx begins by asking what are "the forms which preceded capitalist production"⁸⁶ and he replies that the historical pre-supposition of the latter is the

separation of free labour from the objective preconditions of its realization . . . Hence above all separation of the toiler from the soil as his natural laboratory: thus dissolution of small free landed property as well as of the joint landed property resting upon the Oriental commune.⁸⁷

In the first form of this landed property there appears a primitive commonwealth as the pre-condition of joint appropriation . . . and utilization of the soil.

The earth is the great laboratory, the arsenal, which provides the means as well as the materials of work, and likewise the location, the basis, of the community.⁸⁸

The individual participates in ownership of the soil and the instruments of production only insofar as he is a member of this primitive commonwealth held together by the ties of consanguinity:

The real appropriation through the process of labour occurs under these presuppositions which are themselves not the product of labor, but appear as its natural or divine preconditions. This form based on the same primitive relationship, can realize itself in many different ways. Thus it is not contradicted by the fact that in more of the Asiatic patterns the encompassing unity, which stands above all these small communities, appears as the superior or as the sole proprietor, (and) the real communities only as hereditary possessors. Since the unity is the true owner and the real precondition of common ownership, it can appear as a particular something above the many real particular communities, where the individual is then in fact without property, or property . . . appears as though mediated for him through a grant by the total unity - which is realized in the despot as the father of the many communities - to the individual through the intermediary of the particular community. The surplus

product . . . thus belongs inherently to this supreme unity. In the midst of Oriental despotism, and of the absence of ownership which juridically seems to obtain therein, there thus exists in fact as the basis this tribal or communal ownership generally produced by a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community, which thus becomes entirely self-sustaining and contains within itself all the conditions of reproduction and surplus production. Part of its surplus labour belongs to the higher unity which at last exists as a person, and this surplus labour makes its appearance both in tribute, etc., and in common labours for the glorification of the unity: in part the real despot, in part the imaginary tribal being, the god.⁸⁹

The kind of common ownership, held together at the top by the "higher unity which at last exists as a person", appears under different historical variants: either the small communities maintain a separate existence and the individual works his plot independently, together with the members of the family; or again,

the unity may extend to communalism at work itself, which may be a formalized system, as in Mexico, notably in Peru, among the ancient Celts, (and) some Indian tribes. Further, the communal form within the tribal organization may appear realized in a head of the tribal family, or rather as the mutual inter-relationship of the heads of families. Thence either a more despotic or more democratic form of this commonwealth. The common pre-conditions of genuine appropriation through labour, waterworks (underlined by Marx), very important among the Asiatic people, means of communication, etc., thus appear as a work of the superior unity, the despotic government suspended above the small communities.

Towns come into existence here only where there is a particularly favourable location of foreign trade; or where the head of state and his satraps exchange their revenue (surplus product) against labour, expend it as labour-funds.⁹⁰

2. Graeco-Roman antiquity: As against this centralized system - historically typified above all by the various Oriental despotisms - Graeco-Roman antiquity, with its development of private property in land, represents what Marx describes as the "second form" wherein the original communal (tribal) organization raises itself to a higher socio-level. The lengthy process whereby the urban patriciate of independent landowners, which here monopolizes political power, builds up its peculiar institutions (ultimately resting upon slave labour and constant war to acquire more slaves) and eventually brings about its own downfall, is described with many fascinating details, and the decline and fall of antiquity leads straight on to the Germanic middle ages.
3. Germanic middle ages: "An(other) form of ownership by the labouring individuals, self-sustaining members of the community, of the natural conditions of their work, is the German. Unlike the specifically Oriental form, the member of the community is not as much a co-owner of the communal property . . . nor,

unlike the Roman or Greek form . . . is the soil occupied by the community . . ." (follows a brief analysis of the ager publicus as the specifically Roman institution, whereby the individual Roman citizen exercises his sovereign private ownership over a particular area of Roman soil).⁹¹

As against these earlier forms, "the German community" - which is treated by Marx as the original cell of the medieval body politic - represents something new:

Ancient classical history is a history of cities, but of cities founded upon landed property and agriculture; Asiatic history is a kind of indifferent union of town and country (the great cities are to be regarded merely as princely camps, as superfetations above the economic construction proper); the middle ages (German age) starts from the countryside as the seat of history, whose further development then proceeds through the antagonism of town and country; modern (history) is urbanization of the land, not as in antiquity ruralization of the town.⁹²

Among the Germans, the coming together of the clan chiefs does not subvert their original independence:

The community appears as union, not as unity, the (originally tribal, later feudal) landowners constituting themselves as "independent subjects".⁹³

The community does not therefore in fact exist as a state . . . as in antiquity, because it does not exist as a city. For the community to come into real existence, the free landed proprietors must come

together in a meeting, whereas, e.g. in Rome, it existed apart from these meetings, in the being of the city itself and the officials standing at its head.⁹⁴

True, the medieval Germans also had their ager publicus, their commons, but it did not, as in Rome, appear

as the peculiar economic existence of the state, side by side with the private owners.

It merely served as a

supplement to individual ownership

and thus represents the sharpest possible contrast to the "Asiatic form" where the individual has

no ownership, only possession;⁹⁵

but it also contrasts sharply with the Graeco-Roman system, where the city has a life of its own, being the collective organization and quasi-ideal representation of the citizens in their public capacity, as distinct from their private existence. Thus, in the European middle ages, private property predominates from the start.

The community exists only in the mutual relation of these individual landowners.⁹⁶

Marx continues with an extremely interesting and subtle analysis of tribal and communal organization in antiquity, interlarded with polemical excursions against Proudhon⁹⁷

which need not concern us here.

(b) Summary of theme: When he returns to his original theme - tribal organization as the source of the subsequent three-fold differentiation into

(a) oriental,

(b) Graeco-Roman, and

(c) Germanic-medieval forms

of private and common ownership - it is to emphasize once more that the tribal system,

wherein the community originally dissolves itself,

recognizes no property save that held by members of the tribe, so that conquered tribes are automatically deprived of it,

Slavery and serfdom are thus only further developments of the property rooted in the tribal system. They necessarily modify all its forms,

though least of all in the "Asiatic form", with its

self-sustaining union of manufacture and agriculture on which this form rests.⁹⁸

What Marx describes as "the general slavery of the Orient" (as distinct from the personal slavery of classical antiquity) appears as a special case of the institution of property. The latter - "in its Asiatic, Slav, antique, German form"⁹⁹ - originally signifies "the relation of the labouring (producing) . . . subject to the con-

ditions of his production or reproduction".¹⁰⁰

Historically this relationship takes different forms, depending upon the existence of the individual "as a member of a tribe or community (whose property he is up to a certain point)": an interesting hint which hardly squares with the rather more idyllic picture subsequently painted by Engels. Man originally makes his appearance on earth as part of a primitive collective:

a generic being, tribal being, herd animal -
though by no means a zoon politikon in the
political sense.¹⁰¹

He individualizes himself through the historical process, which is primarily a process of evolving various forms of communal and private property, i.e. various ways of organizing his social intercourse with nature and the - natural or artificial - preconditions of work. The different forms of this metabolism correspond to different stages of society, among which Oriental society is historically closer to man's primitive origins, having conserved some elements of primitive communism "in the midst of Oriental despotism". Hence the succession of stages - Asiatic, antique, feudal, modern - mirrors the gradual dissolution of the "primitive unity", and the evolution of private ownership properly so called. The forcible dis-

ruption of the Indian or Chinese village community by European capital completes the process by rendering it truly global.

6) Conclusions.

- (a) Introduction: With this historical sketch in mind we can now return to our starting point and try to establish whether Marx's and Engels' utterances on the subject of Oriental society are reducible to a consistent pattern.¹⁰²
- (b) Changing attitude towards Asiatic society: The picture is in some ways a puzzling one. Reference has already been made to the gradual change in Marx's attitude towards the Asian village community and its resistance to the battering rams of Western capitalism.

Now when one turns to the other structural elements of the "Asiatic mode of production", the centralized governmental despotism, it would seem as though Marx and Engels gradually deepened their hostility to this form of rule, to the point of discovering some positive virtues not only in private property but even in European feudalism and the Germanic middle ages. How else can we account for Marx's 1859 statement about "Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production" being "progressive epochs in the economic formation of society".

It must be remembered that these words were written shortly after he had composed his unpublished draft of 1857-8, with its quasi-Hegelian stress on the element of personal freedom inherent in the rude institutions of the European middle ages. It must also be recalled that for Marx "progressive" does not signify whatever happens to be going, as it later did for his more thoughtless followers. "Progress" in his sense stands for the unfolding of man's dormant powers. European feudalism is "progressive" compared with Asiatic or Graeco-Roman society because thanks to its relatively healthy starting point it embodies new potentialities of growth and human development; in Hegel's terminology it represents "a new principle".

These potentialities clearly have to do with a circumstance to which Marx alludes in passing in the Grundrisse: the fact that among the Germans political power did not at first exist separately from the individuals, but was simply the result of joint decisions taken in public.

But exactly how does it relate to the more strictly theoretical concepts formulated by Marx and Engels?

(c) Theoretical concepts: There is no question that

both men maintained and even accentuated their original aversion to Oriental rule considered as a political system.

As we have seen, their first tentative utterances go back to the 1850's, when Marx was still inclined on occasion to play off the moral superiority of the decaying Confucian empire against the crude materialist aims of the encroaching Europeans. These polemical side-swipes are, however, scarcely to be taken seriously. They relate back to the familiar 18th Century habit of contrasting the virtuous Chinese with the hypocritical Europeans: an amiable fantasy which Marx commonly ranked with other childish naiveties of the Rousseauist age.

When he speaks as a theorist, the term "semi-Asiatic" carries connotations which are both precise and unflattering.

Moreover, it was gradually extended to Russia and became the standard reproach addressed to the government of that country. In this respect Engels took the lead,¹⁰³ but Marx followed suit in contrasing "Russia" with "Europe",¹⁰⁴ and thereafter consistently referred to the Tsarist government as a despotism suspended above an unfree peasantry.

The point is briefly made in a well known work, the Anti-Duhring:

Where the ancient communes have continued to exist, they have for thousands of years formed the basis of the most barbarous form of state, Oriental despotism, from India to Russia.¹⁰⁵

Lastly, there are Engels' writings of the 1890's in which it is indeed suggested that Tsarist despotism is crumbling (and even that "the young Russian bourgeoisie has the State entirely in its power"), but here too the surviving "despotic autocracy of the Tsar" is related to the "old communistic village community" - now in the process of breaking up.

Russia and socialist development: In between, he and Marx had however, given qualified support to the notion that the village community might become the starting point of a socialist development. How was this to be accomplished? We have two statements from Marx, both regrettably brief.

(i) Letter to Zasulich: In his letter to Vera Zasulich of March 8th, 1881, we find him ready to go some distance in accepting the Populist idea that the resistance of the village community to private capitalism might offer the emerging socialist movement a unique opportunity; though after stating that "this community is the point d'appui

of social regeneration in Russia", he is at pains to add that "the pernicious influences which attack it from all sides" must be eliminated, so as "to assure it of normal conditions for a spontaneous development".¹⁰⁶

- (ii) Preface to Communist Manifesto: Then there is the preface to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto, dated January 21st, 1882, with the quasi-Trotskyist suggestion that "if the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development".¹⁰⁷

These hints point in the direction of a controversy which was destined to convulse the Russian socialist movement for decades, but they do not contribute much to the strictly theoretical concept of the "Asiatic mode". At most they imply that for Marx socialism offered a way out of the uncomfortable dilemma suggested by his researches into Oriental society: the element of personal freedom, so plainly lacking in that state and equally so plainly at the roots of West European feudalism (and capitalism), might enter the system

after the collapse of its "political superstructure". In different terms, the approaching fall of Tsarism presented an opportunity to develop the healthy care of the ancient communal organization, instead of disrupting it completely in the interest of capitalism.

India and China: It is noteworthy that Marx - and to some extent Engels - saw such an opportunity latent in Russia, but not in India or China: presumably because Russia was only "semi-Asiatic". It was not a genuinely European country, but it nonetheless possessed the germ of development, whereas "the East" proper was stagnant. For the same reason unfortunately, Russia was a permanent menace to Europe, and even its internal progress tended to make it more dangerous, because more aggressive and powerful.

The way out lay in a form of Europeanization which did away with the autocracy without - as the liberals would have it - simultaneously introducing Western capitalism. The commune - or what was left of it - was to be preserved as the future basis of a socialist society or at any rate as an element of such a society.

With this analysis the Populists were in agreement, and those among them who in the 1880's

and 1890's gradually transformed themselves into Marxists could feel that they had not renounced the ideals and values which had originally brought them to socialism.

Conversely, Marx for his part might think that by relating socialism back to pre-individualist communal, forms of ownership, he had closed the circle of his argument: bourgeois society, so far from being "natural" and permanent, was revealed to be simply one socio-economic form among others.

(d) Genesis of the Oriental state: The unsolved, or half-solved problem lay in the genesis of the Oriental state. In his writings of the early 1850's Marx had stressed both

(a) its centralized character, and

(b) its independence from the vast mass of scattered village communes.

In the 1857-8 draft the roots of despotism in general are traced back to the tribal organization, with its tendency to "realize" its internal unity in a personal ruler. Subsequently we find references to "the state" as "the supreme landlord", but no analysis of the means whereby the despotic sovereign builds up his power by surrounding himself with an administrative apparatus.

From all this it is not difficult to conclude that Marx for some reason did not fully confront the problem of the bureaucracy. Yet the latter's role is frequently alluded to in his other writings, notably in his diatribes against Bonapartism. His failure to make more of it in connection with "Asiatic modes" remains an oddity. Perhaps the fact that he thought of it as a "caste" as distinct from a "class" of society lessened his interest in the subject; but though a possible explanation this is hardly an adequate defence.¹⁰⁸

- (e) In his Theories of Surplus Value (1861-63) Marx quotes Richard Jones to the effect that "the surplus revenue from the soil, the only revenue except those of the peasants of any considerable amount, were (in Asia, and more especially in India) distributed by the state and its officers".

Taken together with

- (a) his own previous observations on the importance of centrally controlled irrigation in Asia, and
- (b) with Engel's subsequent remarks (mainly in the Anti-Dühring) about the emergence of a ruling class from within primitive society,

the elements of a complete theory of Oriental despotism appear to be present.

Why were they not fully exploited?

Perhaps an indirect answer is afforded by a somewhat lengthy passage from Engels which demonstrates at once the enormous advance in understanding he and Marx had actually effected in relation to earlier writers, and the point where their investigations tailed off into an uncritical acceptance of the prevalent Victorian attitude in regard to state and society:

It is not necessary for us to examine here how this independence of social functions in society increased with time until it developed into domination over society; how he who was originally the servant, where conditions were favourable, changed gradually into the lord; how this lord, depending on the conditions, emerged as an Oriental despot or satrap, the dynast of a Greek tribe, chieftan of a Celtic clan, and so on; and to what extent he subsequently had recourse to force in the course of this transformation; and how finally the individual rulers united into a ruling class. Here we are only concerned with establishing the fact that the exercise of a social function was everywhere the basis of political supremacy; and further, that political supremacy has existed for any length of time only when it discharged its social functions. However great the number of despotisms which rose and fell in Persia and India, each was fully aware that above all it was the entrepreneur responsible for the collective maintenance of irrigation throughout the river valleys without which no agriculture was possible there. It was reserved for the enlightened English to lose sight of this in India; they let the irrigation canals and sluices fall into decay, and are now at last discovering, through the regularly recurring famines, that they have neglected the one activity which might have made their rule in

India at least as legitimate as that of their predecessors.¹⁰⁹

Setting aside the polemical glance at the British Government in India, what does this passage suggest, if not that Engels - and by implication Marx, since he had seen the text before publication - thought of the "ruling class" in political terms, as the governing caste responsible for the exercises of those superior functions without which social life would come to a stop?

The Anti-Duhring does not contradict previous utterances. Political power arises from the exercise of a necessary social function: it then becomes independent of society (and of its origins) but retains its roots in a collective need which it serves, tant bien que mal, until the social organism itself changes its character so as to require a different kind of "superstructure".

The state, in short, is an epiphenomenon. Although it does have a life of its own, it is subservient to the real basic needs of society; consequently the long run process can be analyzed in terms of the latter.

(f) Conclusions: At this point, however, we are on the threshold of the modern age, and for the same reason at the end of our investigation into the manner in which Marx and Engels, at the peak of

of the Victorian era, saw the problem of political power in an Eastern setting.

The next question is to what extent Marx and Engels examined the possibility of bureaucratic centralization in an industrial society.

Power in post-capitalist societies.

(a) Introduction: It is therefore evident that Marx does view the state, in the conditions of Asiatic despotism, as the dominant force in society, independent from and superior to all its members, and that those who control its administration are society's authentic rulers.

Karl Wittfogel has noted that Marx did not pursue this theme after the 1850's and that "in the writings of the later period he emphasized the technical side of large scale waterworks, where previously he had emphasized their political setting"¹¹⁰. The reason for this, Professor Wittfogel suggests, is that "obviously the concept of Oriental despotism contained elements that paralyzed his search for truth";¹¹¹ hence his "retrogressions" on the subject.

But the explanation for Marx's lack of concern for the topic would seem much simpler and much less sinister; it is that he was, in the 1860's and 1870's primarily concerned with Western capitalism. Furthermore the notion of bureaucratic despotism can

hardly have held any great terror for him since he had, in fact, worked through its nearest equivalent in capitalist society, namely Bonapartism, and had analyzed it as an altogether different phenomenon from the despotism encountered in Asiatic society.

Nor is it accurate to suggest, as does Lichtheim, that Marx for some reason shirked the problem of bureaucracy in post-capitalist society.¹¹² On the contrary, this may be said to be a crucial element in Marx's thought in the late 1860's and in the early 1870's.

His concern with the question, and with the state, finds expression in this period in his discussion of the nature of political power in post-capitalist societies, and particularly in his view of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This theme had last occupied Marx in 1851-2; after almost twenty years it was again brought to the fore by the Paris Commune, by his struggles with anarchism in the First International and by the programmatic pronouncement of German Social Democracy.

It is to this, one of the most important and the most misunderstood aspects of Marx's works on the state, that we must now turn.

It needs to be stressed at the outset, however, that this aspect of Marx's work adds nothing to his

analysis of the phenomenon of bureaucratic centralization. It serves to illustrate, however, Marx's continuing interest in the problem of the bureaucracy and in the nature of political power in post-capitalist society. In short this is the work of Marx the ideologist rather than Marx the sociologist.

- (b) Democratic republic versus dictatorship of the proletariat: It is first of all necessary to go back to the democratic and representative republic, which must be clearly distinguished from the dictatorship of the proletariat: for Marx, the two concepts have nothing in common. An element of confusion arises from the fact that Marx bitterly denounced the class character of the democratic republic, yet supported its coming into being. The contradiction is only apparent; Marx saw the democratic republic as the most advanced type of political regime in bourgeois society, and wished to see it prevail over more backward and "feudal" political systems. But it remains for him a system of class rule, indeed the system in which the bourgeois rules most directly.

The limitations of the democratic republic, from Marx's point of view, are made particularly clear in the Address of the Central Committee of the Communist League which he and Engels wrote in March,

1850. They wrote .

Far from desiring to revolutionize all society for the revolutionary proletarians, the democratic petty bourgeoisie strive for a change in social conditions by means of which existing society will be made as tolerable and comfortable as possible for them.

They would, therefore, demand such measures as "the diminution of state expenditure by a curtailment of the bureaucracy and shifting the chief taxes onto the big landowners and bourgeois . . . the abolition of the pressure of big capital on small, through public credit institutions and laws against usury . . . the establishment of bourgeois property relations in the countryside by the complete abolition of feudalism". But in order to achieve their purpose they would need

a democratic state structure, either constitutional or republican, that will give them and their allies, the peasants, a majority; also a democratic communal structure that will give them direct control over communal property and over a series of functions now performed by the bureaucrats.¹¹³

However, they added,

as far as the workers are concerned, it remains certain that they are to remain wage workers as before; the democratic petty-bourgeois only desire better wages and a more secure existence for the workers . . . they hope to bribe the workers by more or less concealed aims and to break their revolutionary potency by making their position tolerable for the moment.¹¹⁴

But Marx and Engels go on,

these demands can in no wise suffice for the party of the proletariat; while the petty-bourgeois democrats would seek to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible, it is our

interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their positions of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of the proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians of these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of existing society but the foundation of a new one.¹¹⁵

At the same time, while the demands and aims of the proletarian party went far beyond anything which even the most advanced and radical petty-bourgeois democrats would accept, the revolutionaries must give them qualified support and seek to push the democratic movement into even more radical directions.¹¹⁶ It was, incidentally, precisely the same strategy which dictated Marx's later attitude to all movements of radical reform, and which led him, as in the Inaugural Address of the First International in 1864, to acclaim the Ten Hours Act or the advances of the cooperative movement as the victories of

the political economy of labour over the political economy of property.¹¹⁷

A lapse: In 1850, Marx and Engels had also suggested one essential task of the proletarian revolutionaries would be to oppose the decentralizing tendencies of the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries. On the contrary the workers must not only strive for a single and

indivisible German republic, but also within this republic for the most determined centralization of power in the hands of the state authority . . .¹¹⁸

This is not only the most extreme "statist" prescription in Marx's (and Engels') work - it is the only one of its kind, leaving aside Marx's first Hegelian pronouncements on the subject. More important is the fact that the prescription is intended not for the proletarian but for the bourgeois democratic revolution. In 1850, Marx and Engels, believed, and said in the Address, that the German workers would not be able

to attain power and achieve their own class interest without completely going through a lengthy revolutionary development.¹¹⁹

The proletarian revolution would see the coming into being of an altogether different form of rule than the democratic republic, namely the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In a letter to J. Wedemeyer in March, 1852, Marx had revealed the cardinal importance he attached to this concept by saying that while no credit was due to him for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggles between them,

what I did that was new was to prove (i) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production, (ii) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, (iii) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to abolition of all classes and to a classless society.¹²⁰

Unfortunately, Marx did not define in any specific way what the dictatorship of the proletariat actually entailed, and more particularly what was its relation to the state. It has been argued by Hal Draper that it is a

social description, a statement of the class character of the political power. It is not a statement about the forms of the government machinery.¹²¹

My own view, on the contrary, is that, for Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat is both

(a) a statement of the class character of the political power, and

(b) a description of the political power itself; and that it is in fact the nature of the political power which it describes which guarantees its class character.

In the 18th Brumaire, Marx had made a point which constitutes a main theme of his thought, namely that all previous revolutions had

perfected this (state) machine instead of smashing it. The parties that contended in turn for domination regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victors.¹²²

Nearly twenty years later, in The Civil War in France, he again stressed how every previous revolution had consolidated

the centralized State power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy and judicature;

and he also stressed how the political character

of the state had changed

simultaneously with the economic changes of society. At the same pace at which the progress of modern history developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labour, the State power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour, of a public force organized for social enslavement of an engine of class despotism. After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the State power stands out in bolder and bolder relief.¹²³

As Draper notes, Marx had made no reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat in all the intervening years. Nor indeed did he so describe the Paris Commune. But what he acclaims above all in the Commune is that, in contrast to previous social convulsions, it sought not the further consolidation of the state power but its destruction. What it wanted, he said, was to have

restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society¹²⁴

Marx also lays stress on the Commune's popular, democratic and egalitarian character, and on the manner in which

not only municipal administration but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune.¹²⁵

Moreover, while the communal force of government was to apply even to the "smallest country hamlet", "the unity of the nation was not to be broken, but on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal Constitution,

and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence".¹²⁶

It is in the light of such views that Marx's verdict on the Commune takes on its full meaning:

this essentially working class government was the political form at last discovered under which to work out the emancipation of labour.¹²⁷

It is of course true that, while Engels, long after Marx's death, did describe the Paris Commune as the dictatorship of the proletariat,¹²⁸ Marx himself did not do so. The reason for this would seem fairly obvious, namely that, for Marx, the dictatorship of the proletariat would be the outcome of a socialist revolution on a national scale; the Commune, as he wrote in 1881, was

merely the rising of a city under exceptional conditions while the majority of the Commune was in no wise socialist, nor could it be.¹²⁹

Even so, it may be justifiably thought that the Commune, in its de-institutionalization of political power, did embody, for Marx, the essential elements of his concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Precisely the opposite view has very generally come to be taken for granted; the following statement in Lichtheim's Marxism is a typical example of

a wide consensus:

His (Marx's) hostility to the state was held in check by a decidedly authoritarian doctrine of political rule during the transition period: prior to being consigned to the dustbins of history; the state was to assume dictatorial powers. In different terms, authority would inaugurate freedom - a typically Hegelian paradox which did not worry Marx though it alarmed Proudhon and Bakunin . . .¹³⁰

The trouble with the view that Marx had a "decidedly authoritarian doctrine" is that it is unsupported by any convincing evidence from Marx himself; and that there is so much evidence which directly runs counter to it.

Marx was undoubtedly the chief opponent of the anarchists in the International. But it is worth remembering that his central quarrel with them concerned above all the manner in which the struggle for a socialist revolution ought to be prosecuted, with Marx insisting on the need for political involvement within the existing political framework, against the anarchists' all or nothing rejection of mere politics; and the quarrel also concerned the question of the type of organization required by the international workers' movement, with Marx insisting on a degree of control by the General Council of the International over its affiliated organizations.

As for the role of the state in the period of transition, there is the well-known passage in

the "private circular" against the anarchists issued by the General Council 1872, Les Pretendues Scissions dans l'Internationale, and most probably written by Marx:

What all socialists understand by anarchism is this: as soon as the goal of the proletarian movement, the abolition of class, shall have been reached, the power of the state, whose function is to keep the great majority of the producers beneath the yoke of a small minority of exploiters will disappear, and governmental function will be transformed into simple administrative functions. The Alliance (i.e. Bakunin's Alliance of Socialist Democracy) turns the thing upside down. It declares anarchism in the ranks of the workers to be an infallible means for disrupting the powerful concentration of social and political forms in the hands of the exploiters. Under this pretext, it asks the International, when the old world is endeavouring to crush our organization to replace organization by anarchism. The international police would ask for nothing better . . . 131

This can hardly be construed as an authoritarian text; nor certainly is Marx's remark in January, 1873 quoted by Lenin in State and Revolution that

if the political struggle of the working class assumes violent forms, if the workers set up this revolutionary dictatorship in place of the dictatorship of the bourgeois, they commit the terrible crime of violating principles, for in order to satisfy their wretched, vulgar, everyday needs, in order to crush the resistance of the bourgeoisie, instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state, they give the state a revolutionary and transitory form . . . 132

Nor is there much evidence of Marx's "decidedly authoritarian doctrine" in his marginal notes of 1875 on the Gotha Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party. In these notes, Marx bitterly

attacked the programme's references to "the free state" ("free state - what is this?") and this is well in line with his belief that the "free state" is a contradiction in terms; and he then asked:

What transformation will the state undergo in communist society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there that are analogous to present functions of the state?

Marx, however, did not answer the question but merely said that it could only be answered "scientifically" and that "one does not get a flea-hop nearer to the problem by a thousandfold combination of the word people with the word state".¹³³ He then goes on:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.¹³⁴

This does not advance matters much, but neither does it suggest the slightest "authoritarian impulse". In the Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx as always before, made a sharp distinction between the democratic republic and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and Engels was clearly mistaken when he wrote in 1891 that the democratic republic was "even the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat".¹³⁵ On the contrary, Marx's critical attitude towards the democratic republic in the

Critique of the Gotha Programme shows that he continued to think of the dictatorship of the proletariat as an altogether different and immeasurably freer form of political power. He wrote in the Critique of the Gotha Programme:

Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinated to it . . . }³⁶

This would seem a good description of Marx's view of the state in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. No doubt, he would have endorsed Engels' view, expressed a few weeks after Marx's death, that

the proletarian class will first have to possess itself of the organized political force of the state and with this aid stamp out the resistance of the capitalist class and reorganize society.¹³⁷

But it is of some significance that, with the possible exception of his remark of January, 1873, referred to earlier, Marx himself, always chose to emphasize the liberating rather than the repressive aspects of post-capitalist political power.

The fact is that, far from bearing any authoritarian imprint, the whole of Marx's work on the state is pervaded by a powerful anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic bias, not only in relation to a distant communist society but also to the period of transition which is to precede it. But the only

thing which, for Marx, makes it tolerable is popular participation and popular rule. If Marx is to be faulted, it is not for any authoritarian bias, but for greatly understating the difficulties of the libertarian position. However, in the light of the experience of socialist movements since Marx wrote, this may perhaps be judged a rather less serious fault than its bureaucratic obverse.

3. Conclusions.

The foregoing discussion illustrates three things:

- (a) Classical theory of the state: First, Marx's classical theory of the state emerged as a consequence of his increasing departure from the Hegelian system. Marx moved in the course of his work from the Hegelian view of the state as the embodiment of Reason to a view of the state as an instrument of class rule.
- (b) Secondary view of the state: Second, that Marx had a secondary view of the state: the state as independent from and superior to all classes; as being the dominant force in society rather than the instrument of a dominant class. The beginnings of this theory are contained in Marx's discussion of Bonapartism, but for Marx, the Bonapartist state, however free it may have been politically from any given class, remains and cannot in a class society but remain, the protector of an economically and

socially dominant class.

The clearest statement of this secondary view is contained in Marx's writings on societies based on the "Asiatic mode of production". Reduced to its essentials Marx's argument is that political power (i.e. of the political bureaucracy) arises from the exercise of a necessary social function: namely the provision of large scale public works.

Marx's theory is both

- (i) historical and
- (ii) sociological.

(i) Sociological: In his writings of the 1850's, in which he discussed the Oriental state, Marx stressed both

- (a) its centralized character, and

Aside: He argued that

- (i) there is no Oriental feudalism;
- (ii) its absence is synonymous with the non-existence of private landed property, which in turn is due to climatic and soil conditions;
- (iii) the centralized Oriental despotism has arisen from the need to provide artificial irrigation.

- (b) its independence from the vast mass of scattered village communes.

(ii) Historical: In the Grundrisse (1857-8), the roots of despotism are traced back to the tribal organization, with its tendency to realize its internal unity in a personal ruler.

Elements of a theory of Oriental society: In his Theories of Surplus Value (1861-63) Marx quotes Richard Jones to the effect that "the surplus revenue from the soil, the only revenues except those of the peasants of any considerable amount, were (in Asia, and more especially in India) distributed by the state and its officers".

It has been shown that taken together with

(a) his own previous observations on the importance of centrally controlled irrigation in Asia, and

(b) with Engels' subsequent remarks (mainly in the Anti-Duhring) about the emergence of a

ruling class from within primitive society, the elements of a complete theory of Oriental despotism appear to be present.

(c) Power in post-capitalist societies: Finally it has been shown through an analysis of Marx's work of the 1860's and early 1870's that he was very much concerned with the problem of power in post-capitalist societies.

This aspect of Marx's work in particular

reveals a powerful anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic bias, in relation to both the distant communist society and also to the period of transition which is to precede it.

FOOTNOTES

¹Karl Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle, 22nd February, 1858, and Karl Marx to Frederick Engels, 2nd April, 1858, in Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), pp. 125, 126.

²For the Critique, see Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe (Hereinafter referred to as MEGA) (Berlin: Marx-Engels Verlag, 1932), I, 1/1, pp. 403-553, or Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right, in Selected Essays, translated by H. J. Stenning (New York: International Publishers, 1926); for Introduction, first published in the Franco-German Annals of 1834, *ibid.*, I, 1/1, pp. 607-21, and Karl Marx, Early Writings, translated and edited by T. B. Bottomore (London: Watts, 1963).

³MEGA, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 360.

⁷Karl Marx to A. Ruge, May 1843, in MEGA, *op. cit.*, p. 565.

⁸MEGA, p. 424.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 498-99.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 519.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 434-35.

¹²Ibid., p. 435.

¹³Ibid., p. 436.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 435.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 582.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 585.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 605.

¹⁸See S. Avineri, "Marx and Jewish Emancipation" in Journal of the History of Ideas, XXV (July-September, 1964) pp. 445-50.

¹⁹MEGA, op. cit., p. 606.

²⁰Ibid., p. 615.

²¹Ibid., p. 619.

²²Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Holy Family (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), p. 154.

²³Ibid., p. 157.

²⁴Ibid., p. 163.

²⁵Ibid., p. 164.

²⁶Ibid., p. 166.

²⁷Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1960), p. 59.

²⁸Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1936), p. 70.

²⁹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works (Hereinafter referred to as MESW) (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), I, p. 35.

³⁰Ibid., p. 51.

³¹See for example, John Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism (London: Longmans, 1963), p. 1444; J. Sanderson, "Marx and Engels on the State," in Western Political Quarterly, XVI, 4 (December, 1963), pp. 946-55.

³²As is suggested by Plamenatz and Sanderson.

³³See, for example, The Class Struggles in France, in MESW, op. cit., passim; The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in MESW, op. cit., passim.

³⁴See, for example, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Elections in Britain, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, On Britain (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p.353. "The Whigs are the aristocratic representatives of the bourgeoisie, of the industrial and commercial middle class. Under the condition that the bourgeoisie should abandon them, to an oligarchy of aristocratic families, the monopoly of government and exclusive possession of office, they make to the middle class, and assist it in conquering all those concessions, which in the course of social and political developments have shown themselves to have become unavoidable and undelayable."

³⁵Ibid., p. 368.

³⁶MESW, op. cit., I, p. 300.

³⁷Ibid., p. 301.

³⁸Ibid., p. 302.

³⁹Ibid., p. 302.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 302.

⁴¹Marx also notes that the identity of interest of the smallholding peasants "begets no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them" so that "they do not form a class". (Ibid., p. 302.) For an interesting discussion of Marx's concept of class, see S. Ossowski, Class Structure in the Class Consciousness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963) v.

⁴²MESW, op. cit., I, p. 303.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 308-09.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 309.

⁴⁵Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, in MESW, op. cit., p. 470.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 470.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 470.

⁴⁸Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, in MESW, op. cit., II, p. 290.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 290-91.

⁵⁰MEGA, op. cit., I, 1/1, p. 456.

⁵¹See Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, introduction by E. J. Hobsbawm (London: Lawrence & Wishart,

1964). This is a translation of a section of Marx's Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie (Rohentwurf) (Berlin, 1853). Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

⁵²MEGA, op. cit., I, 1/1, p. 438.

⁵³MESW, op. cit., I, p. 239.

⁵⁴Karl Marx to Frederick Engels, 2nd June, 1853, in Selected Correspondence (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p. 99.

⁵⁵Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, op. cit., p. 79.

⁵⁶Published in New York Daily Tribune, 5th August, 1853, and reprinted in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, On Colonialism (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968).

⁵⁷Karl Marx, Capital, III, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), pp. 771-72.

⁵⁸Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The First Indian War of Independence (1857-59) (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 16. In Capital, I (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), p. 514.

Marx also notes that "one of the material bases of the power of the State over the small disconnected producing organisms of India, was the regulation of the water supply"; also "the necessity for predicting the rise and fall of the Nile created Egyptian astronomy and with it the domination of the priests, as directors of agriculture". (Ibid., p. 514.)

⁵⁹Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, op. cit., p. 71.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 69.

⁶¹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence, op. cit., p. 99.

⁶²Ibid., p. 16.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 18-20.

⁶⁴Karl Marx, Marx on China: Articles from the New York Daily Tribune, edited by Dona Torr (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1951).

⁶⁵Ibid., p. xvii.

⁶⁶Published in New York Daily Tribune, 20th September 1858, and reprinted in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, On Colonialism, op. cit., See also Marx on China, op. cit., p. 52.

⁶⁷Published in New York Daily Tribune, 3rd December, 1859, and reprinted in On Colonialism, op. cit. See also Marx on China, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

⁶⁸Published in New York Daily Tribune, 5th August, 1853, and reprinted in On Colonialism, op. cit.

⁶⁹Published in New York Daily Tribune, 8th August, 1853, and reprinted in On Colonialism, op. cit.

⁷⁰Quoted after the Moscow, 1960, English-language edition, p. 771.

⁷¹Karl Marx, Capital, III, op. cit., p. 771.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 771-72.

⁷³Ibid., p. 772.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 328-29.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 328.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷The best discussion (in my view) of Marx's methodology is to be found in the chapter on Historical Materialism in George Lichtheim's Marxism: an Historical and Critical Study (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

⁷⁸Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, Section 1, V, p. 11.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 12.

⁸¹Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, op. cit., p. 12.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁸³Ibid., p. 13.

⁸⁴See Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, op. cit.

⁸⁵Translated as Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, op. cit.

⁸⁶Grundrisse, op. cit., p. 375.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 375-76.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 376-77.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 377.5.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 380-81.

⁹²Ibid., p. 382.

⁹³Ibid., p. 383.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 383.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 384.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 384-92.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 392.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 395.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 395-96.

¹⁰²It is worth noting at this point that had the Grundrisse been published in 1900 instead of remaining unknown until our days, one may suppose that Max Weber would have found even better reason for relating himself to Marx's researches. Marx in fact anticipates a good deal of what Weber had to say about Oriental society.

¹⁰³Published in New York Daily Tribune, 19th April, 1853 and reprinted in On Colonialism, op. cit.

¹⁰⁴Published in New York Daily Tribune, 5th August, 1853, and reprinted in On Colonialism, op. cit.

¹⁰⁵Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), p. 251.

¹⁰⁶Quoted in P. W. Blackstock and B. F. Hoselitz, The Russian Menace to Europe (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1952), p. 275.

¹⁰⁷Quoted in Blackstock and Hoselitz, *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁰⁸For a critique of Marx's and Engels' views on the subject of Oriental despotism see Wittfogel's Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power, op. cit., p. 380.

¹⁰⁹Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring, op. cit., p. 249.

¹¹⁰Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, op. cit., p. 381.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 387.

¹¹²George Lichtheim, Marxism: an Historical and Critical Study, op. cit., p. 381.

¹¹³Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League, in MESW, op. cit., I, p. 101.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 101.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 307-09.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 106.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 108.

¹²⁰Karl Marx and J. Wedemeyer, 5th March 1852, in Selected Correspondence, op. cit., p. 86.

¹²¹Hal Draper, "Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in New Politics, I, 4, p. 102.

¹²²MESW, op. cit., I, p. 301.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 468-69.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 473.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 471.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 472.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 473.

¹²⁸"Of late the Social Democratic philistine has once more been filled with wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Well and good gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

¹²⁹Karl Marx to F. Domela- Nienwenhuis, 22nd February, 1881, in Selected Correspondence, op. cit., p. 410.

¹³⁰George Lichtheim, Marxism, op. cit., p. 374.

¹³¹G. M. Stekloff, History of the First International (London: International Publishers, 1928), pp. 179-80.

¹³²V. I. Lenin, State and Revolution, Marxist Library VIII (New York: International Publishers, 1932), p. 54.

¹³³Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, in MESW, II, op. cit., p. 30.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 30.

¹³⁵Quoted in Lenin, State and Revolution, op. cit., p. 54.

¹³⁶MESW, II, op. cit., p. 29.

¹³⁷Frederick Engels to P. Van Patten, 18th April, 1883, in Selected Correspondence, op. cit., p. 437.

CONCLUSION

1. Criticism of mass society.

- (a) Introduction: The concept of mass society has its intellectual origin in several intellectual traditions. A common perspective unites these traditions and makes them part of the history of the idea of mass society. It is a view of modern society as containing certain fundamental pathological tendencies which are believed to inhere in its development. The theory of mass society adds to such concepts as "democratic society", "urban society", and "industrial society" an emphasis on the socially disintegrative effects of democratization, urbanization, and industrialization. Foremost among these effects, as we have already seen, are the decline of community and authority and the spread of pseudo-community and pseudo-authority.

There follows a brief summary of the major intellectual traditions which together make up the history of the critique of mass society.

- (b) Aristocratic criticism of the mass society or mass as the judgement by the incompetent: The concept of mass society has its major intellectual origins in the nineteenth century criticism of the revolutionary

changes in European (and especially French) society. Many European thinkers believed that the decisive social tendency was the change from aristocratic to democratic society.¹ It was not simply that a shift occurred in the class composition of governing groups. More fundamental was the shift that these thinkers perceived in the bases of social order. Formerly standards of value and conduct had been assumed to exist as part of a natural order of society; in democratic societies, by contrast, the arbitrary will and opinion of the masses were replacing established standards.

Early representatives of this kind of social criticism of the democratization of society were Catholic thinkers like Joseph de Maistre and the Vicomte de Bonald.

Following the ascendancy of portions of the middle classes, marked by such events as the accession in 1830 of Louis Phillippe, the bourgeois king, in France, and the passage of the 1832 Reform Act in England, liberal thinkers adopted mass society ideas, not to defend the old order but to assess the strength and weaknesses of that order. Thus, Tocqueville (1835) moved from a fairly hopeful analysis of the possibilities of preserving standards in a democratic society (in light of his examination

of America) to a more pessimistic view of the matter following the 1848 revolution in France. Even so influential and liberal a thinker as J. S. Mill found himself in wide agreement with Tocqueville's more pessimistic diagnosis of democratic culture.

Burckhardt and Nietzsche, among many other late nineteenth century romantic thinkers, sought to interpret changes in European society as the erosion of culture. Ortega (1930) later formulated a highly popular version of this view. As first introduced by Ortega y Gasset in his Revolt of the Masses, the terms "masses" and "mass" had a far different meaning than the usage implied by the term "mass media" and its invidious connotations. For Ortega, the word "mass" did not designate a group of persons - but the low quality of modern civilization, resulting from the loss of a commanding position by the "gentlemen" who once made up the educated elite. Modern taste, for Ortega, represents the judgement of the unqualified. Modern life "makes a tabula rasa of all classicism". Nothing that is in the past can be "any possible model or standard". Even "the famous Renaissance reveals itself as a period of narrow provincialism - why not use the word? - ordinary". Modern culture, since it disowns the past, seeks a "free expression

of its vital desires"; it becomes, therefore, an unrestrained "spoiled child" with no controlling standards, "no limit to its caprice". In Ortega, one finds the most sweeping attack against all modernity. His is the disdain of the humanist for the vulgar.²

- (c) Democratic criticism of the mass society: the mass as mob: This aristocratic criticism of the development of nineteenth century society profoundly influenced democratic criticism of the development of twentieth century society. Where the first centred on the intellectual defence of elite values against the rise of mass participation, the second developed as a defence of democratic values against totalitarianism.

The defence posture of the aristocratic thinkers was adopted by democratic thinkers who, having won the nineteenth century war of ideas and institutions, now sought to preserve their gains against the totalitarian challenge. Thus, such students of totalitarianism as Lederer (1940), Fromm (1941), Neumann (1942), Arendt (1951), and Kornhauser (1959) see in the fragmentation of society the opportunity for new forms of domination based on the mobilization of large populations.

While for Mannheim, and the neo-Marxists,

mass society is equated with monolithic bureaucratization, for Emil Lederer and Hannah Arendt it is defined by the elimination of difference, by uniformity, aimlessness, alienation, and the failure of integration.

In Lederer's view, society is made up of many social groups united by function or self-interest, some rational in purpose, some irrational. So long as society is stratified these groups can impose only partial control, and irrational emotions are restricted. But when the lines dividing social groups break down, the people become volatile and febrile "masses", ready to be manipulated by a leader.

Hannah Arendt, perhaps because she writes a decade later, sees the masses as already overspilling the bounds. The masses are those who, because of indifference or simply sheer number, do not belong to "political parties or municipal governments or professional organizations or trade-unions" - in short, organizations that exist to satisfy a common interest - and they

form the majority of those large numbers of neutral, politically indifferent people who never join a party or hardly ever go to the polls.

Such people already stand "outside" of society. The revolt of the masses is a revolt against the

loss of social status along with which (is) lost the whole sector of communal relationships in whose framework common sense makes sense. . . . The masses (become) obsessed by a desire to escape from reality because in their essential homelessness they can no longer bear its accidental incomprehensible aspect.

And so, because

(a) modern life sunders all social bonds, and
because

(b) the techniques of modern communication have
perfected the means whereby propaganda can
manipulate the masses,

the "age of the masses" is now upon us.³

- (d) Traditional and modern societies: A third kind of analysis which has contributed significantly to the development of the idea of mass society during the past century is the effort to distinguish between traditional and modern societies, a line of analysis that has become a central theoretical perspective of sociology. An early formulation of this perspective was Maine's distinction between societies dominated by status relationships of kinship and those dominated by contract relations of individuals.⁴ Tonnies in his highly influential analysis of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, elaborated Maine's thesis.⁵ Further evolution of this line of analysis is to be found in Durkheim's theory of social solidarity and anomie,⁶ and in Max Weber's treatment of

traditional and bureaucratic authority.⁷

What made this kind of sociological theory relevant to the idea of mass society was its analysis of the atomization and depersonalization of social organization resulting from modernization.

- (e) The mass as the bureaucratic society: Some theorists see extreme rationalization and extreme bureaucratization - the over-organization of life - as the salient features of the mass society. The idea of "rationalization" goes back to Hegel and Marx and along with it the notions of "estrangement" or "alienation", "reification", and the "fetishism" of commodities - all of which express the thought that in modern society man has become a "thing", an object manipulated by society, rather than a subject who can remake life in accordance with his own desires. In our time, George Simmel, Max Weber, and Karl Mannheim have developed and elaborated these concepts. In Mannheim's work - notably in his Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction - the diverse strands are all brought together.⁸

Mannheim's argument, put schematically, runs as follows: modern large-scale organization, oriented exclusively to efficiency, creates hierarchies that concentrate all decisions at the top. Even technical decisions are removed from the shop floor

and centred in specialized bodies that have no direct contact with work. Since the concern is solely with efficiency, rather than human satisfactions, all solutions to problems are defined in relation to this single value. Mannheim calls this "functional rationality", or direct means-ends relationship, in contrast to "substantial rationality", which is the application of reason to human affairs.

This centralization of decision-making not only creates conformity but stunts the initiative of subordinates and leaves them unsatisfied in their personal needs for gratification and esteem. (In effect, the demand for submission to extreme rationality deprives the individual of the power to act rationally, i.e., in accordance with reason. This frustration seeks release in irrational ways.) Normally the routinization of one's job dulls the edge of frustration and provides some security. But when unemployment looms, the helplessness becomes sharpened, and self-esteem is threatened. Since individuals cannot rationally locate the source of their frustration (i.e. the impersonal bureaucratic system itself), they will, under these circumstances, seek scapegoats and turn to fascism.

- (f) Mass as undifferentiated number (mass psychology):
The development of mass psychology provided still

another source of ideas about mass society (Reiwald 1949). Gustave le Bon, Scipio Sighele, and Gabriel Tarde were leading students of mass behaviour at the turn of the century. In their analysis of the heightened suggestibility and manipulability of people no longer constrained by communal ties and traditional authorities, these theorists contributed to the social psychology of mass society. This line of analysis was given a more sociological cast by American students of what came to be called "collective behaviour".

As understood generally by sociologists, a mass is a heterogeneous and undifferentiated audience, as opposed to a class, or any parochial and relatively homogeneous segment. A movie audience, for example, is a "mass" because the individuals looking at the screen are, in the words of Herbert Blumer, "separate, detached and anonymous"⁹. The mass "has no social organization, no body of custom and tradition, no established set of rules or rituals, no organized group of sentiments, no structure of status roles and no established leadership".

To become part of the mass is to be divorced - or "alienated" - from oneself. And the instruments which project the dominant social values that people choose as their imago, or ideal image and desire -

television, radio, and the cinema - impose a mass response on their audience.

2. Marx and criticism of the mass society.

The foregoing is a brief summary of the major sources of ideas about mass society. It has been the purpose of this paper to show at what points Marx has contributed to this development. Two aspects of Marx's work have been considered pertinent to this question. Firstly, it has been shown that Marx preceded Tönnies in his distinction between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft and that he went beyond mere description and analyzed those aspects of the social structure that shaped the relationships of persons to one another in modern society. These aspects of the social structure were the division of labour, commodity production, and the state.

Secondly, it has been demonstrated through a detailed examination of Marx's writings that he was extremely concerned with the problem of bureaucracy, in part because he saw it as a major source of alienation, but also because he saw it as a threat to human freedom in the more usual sense of the term; in other words as a threat to democracy.

In his writings of the 1850's including the unpublished Grundrisse (1857-58) Marx recognizes that a distinctive type of political system, absolutistic

and bureaucratic in nature, tends to arise in arid or semi-arid regions which make the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture. The construction and management of large-scale irrigation installations must be undertaken by the states since they lie beyond the capacity of any other organized group at that level of social development. These functions require centralized planning and supervision and absolute power of enforcement, which inevitably initiate trends toward the suppression or fractionation of private property.

The classical economists like Adam Smith, James and John Stuart, and Richard Jones first noted and characterized "Oriental despotism" and Karl Marx further elaborated their definitions. Since Marx, Karl Wittfogel has gone much further in clarifying the origins, delimiting the distinctive features, and indicating the widespread geographical distribution of this major type of political system. He also delineates the variations it can assume under different conditions of environment, economy and cultural contact, and the manner in which states of the "hydraulic" type can extend their managerial and bureaucratic controls to other kinds of public works, such as navigation and drainage canals, massive defence installations, and even modern industrial plants, always with comparable social consequences. Far more adequately than his predecessors,

Wittfogel contrasts with Oriental despotism, where the state is stronger than society and men outside the ruling apparatus are essentially slaves of the state, several alternative types of political organization, especially the feudalism of medieval Europe and Japan and the modern democracies of the Western world. Both are "multi-centred" in the sense that the state is effectively checked and restrained by other strong and competing organizations, such as the church, craft and merchant guilds, and the private owners of land and industrial capital. Such political systems not only offer vastly greater protection to the individual but also provide a basis for adoptive and progressive social change instead of slow stagnation.

Finally in his work of the 1860's and 1870's Marx reveals considerable concern for the problem of power in post-capitalist societies. As noted earlier, this aspect of Marx's work in particular reveals a powerful anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic bias, in relation to both the distant communist society and also to the period of transition which is to precede it.

Marx, in short, definitely anticipated the role of bureaucratic organization in inhibiting the growth of democracy to which Weber and afterwards Michels, gave so much attention. The following passage from Engel's

introduction to Civil War in France is almost a verbatim anticipation of Michels' thesis on the "iron law of oligarchy".

5: Society had created its own organs to look after its common interests, originally through simple division of labour. But these organs, at whose head was the state power, had in the course of time, in pursuance of their own special interests, transformed themselves from servants of society into masters of society.¹⁰

For Marx, however, this characteristic of bureaucracy prevailed only under certain conditions, and was in no sense inevitable under all social conditions. It was neither a basis for pessimism as with Weber nor an "iron law" as with Michels. For Marx the transformation of the bureaucratic organs of the state from servants to masters of society could be prevented by two infallible means, those in fact employed by the Commune.

It filled all posts - administrative, judicial, and educational - by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors. And in the second place, all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers. . . . In this way an effective barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up, even apart from the binding mandates to delegates to representative bodies which were added besides.¹¹

Clearly then, Marx and Engels were aware of the problems of bureaucracy and pointed out some of the means by which its anti-democratic effects could be eliminated or at least mitigated.

In conclusion, we believe that certain aspects of the work of Karl Marx can be seen as a significant

contribution to the critique of the mass society and that his work, as a whole, has a much closer relation to wider sociological theory than is commonly supposed.

FOOTNOTES

¹Joseph de Maistre, Considerations on France, 1796, and The Essay on the Generating Principle of Political Constitutions and Other Human Institutions, 1814; Vicomte de Benald, The Theory of Political and Religious Authority, 1796.

²Jose Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961)

³Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (2nd ed., enl.; New York: Meridian, 1958)

⁴Henry Maine, Ancient Law (London, 1861). This reference is to the 1906 edition (New York: Henry Holt)

⁵Ferdinand Tonnies, Community and Society, edited and translated by Charles P. Loomis (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957)

⁶Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960); Suicide: A Study in Sociology (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951)

⁷Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, edited and translated by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946)

⁸Karl Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction: Studies in Modern Social Structure (New York: Harcourt, 1940)

⁹Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in New Outline of the Principles of Sociology, edited by Alfred M. Lee (2nd ed., rev.; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951)

¹⁰Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Civil War in France in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works (2 vols.; Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950)

¹¹Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works (2 vols.; Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), p. 439.

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